DUAL CONSCIOUSNESS: DILUTION OF DISSENT IN MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP IN THE SELECT WORKS OF AMY TAN

Thesis submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in English Language and Literature

by

Neelima V.

Research Guide

Dr. T.C. Brindha Kumari
Associate Professor and Head (Retd.)
Mercy College, Palakkad

Co-Guide

Dr. Praseedha G.
Assistant Professor and Research Guide
Mercy College, Palakkad

Research Centre for Comparative Studies
Postgraduate Department of English
Mercy College, Palakkad

November 2018

DECLARATION

I, Neelima V., hereby declare that the thesis titled "Dual Consciousness: Dilution of Dissent in Mother-Daughter Relationship in the Select Works of Amy Tan" is a bonafide research carried out by me under the supervision and guidance of Dr. T. C. Brindha Kumari and Dr. Praseedha G., and it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship, or any other similar title or recognition.

Place: Palakkad

Date : Neelima V.

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled "Dual Consciousness: Dilution of Dissent in Mother-Daughter Relationship in the Select Works of Amy Tan" submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is a work of bonafide research carried out by Neelima V. under our supervision and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship, or any other similar title or recognition.

Place: Palakkad

Date :

Dr. T.C. Brindha Kumari (Guide)
Associate Professor and Head (Retd.)
P.G. Dept. of English & Research
Centre for Comparative Studies
Mercy College, Palakkad

Dr. Praseedha G. (Co-Guide)
Assistant Professor and Research Guide
P.G. Dept. of English & Research
Centre for Comparative Studies
Mercy College, Palakkad

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In many ways, this thesis resonates with my personal and academic journey to-date, and there are a handful of people to thank from all along the way. I extend my deepest gratitude to my guide, Dr. T.C. Brindha Kumari whose support and encouragement kindled me in the completion of this thesis. Her motherly care and concern kept me constantly engaged with my research work. I thank you for being my guide, mentor and above all a good listener through these years. This thesis would not have happened without you. I am highly indebted to my Co-Guide, Dr. Praseedha G. for sharing her valuable time and listening to all my queries with patience. I have benefited greatly from the discussions with her.

I extend my sincere thanks to the former Principals of Mercy College, Dr. Sr. Kripa and Dr. Sr. Alice Thomas and the Principal Dr. Sr. Lily P.V. for providing me with the necessary facilities in the centre to carry out this research work. I sincerely thank the Head of the Department, Dr. Sheena John for her timely support. I also thank the former head of the department, Dr.W.S. Kottiswari for her love, care and support. I would like to add a special note of thanks to my dear teachers and friends at the Department for their support and encouragement during the six long years.

I extend my gratitude to Patricia Chu, Associate Professor of the George Washington University and the Asian American critic for her informative and lengthy e-mail regarding the Asian American literature and criticism.

I modestly acknowledge the affection and support of my family throughout this academic journey. I am highly indebted to my parents, Viswanathan P.I. and Prasanna K., for their unwavering love, support and understanding. I express my heartfelt love to my husband, Jagjith K., for being my best friend and a reasonable critic. I thank you for making my life easier in every possible manner. I am blessed with two wonderful children, Dhyan and Minnu whose presence makes my life positive and challenging. I thank in a very special way my in-laws who always provide me emotional support and encourage me to chase my dreams.

I would like to place on record my sincere thanks to my small friends' circle who have shared with me the pleasures and difficulties of the research work. The ups and downs in our bond have strengthened me. I will always cherish the moments spent with you. I would like to thank our library assistant, Mrs. Reena Wilson, for her timely assistance and support.

I am blessed to have a community of colleagues, staff and students at G.H.S.S. Tholanur who constantly provide me with a warm social space to grow as a teacher and as a person. I thank my colleague, Mrs. Suja Sumesh for her help at specific times of need. Besides the names mentioned here, several others have helped me for the successful completion of my thesis, and I thank each of them for their good will and prayers.

Dedicated

To

my father, Viswanathan P.I., for being the best teacher in my life. He is the reason for what I am and who I am today;

my mother, Prasanna K., for sharing each moment of happiness and pain with me;

my husband, Jagjith K., for his unconditional love and support; and

my children, Dhyan and Minnu for their charming presence in my life.

ABBREVIATIONS OF TITLES IN THESIS

JLC	:	*The Joy Luck Club*
KGW	:	*The Kitchen God's Wife*
BSD	:	*The Bonesetter's Daughter*
VAM	:	*The Valley of Amazement*
OPF	:	*The Opposite of Fate: A Book of Musings*

Documentation : MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (Eighth Edition) has been used to document the thesis.

CONTENTS

Preface

The dual consciousness explains the predicament as experienced by the diasporic individuals, especially women who remain twice jeopardized, both as females and as second class citizens in diaspora. The split consciousness involves the multiple levels of consciousness for the immigrant women who shape and recast their lives in accordance with the changing life conditions and ambience of the new land. The present study, as it gives an elusive explanation of the struggles of immigrant women, attempts to examine the multiple ways with which individuals, particularly mothers and daughters, struggle to add meaning to their dual cultural alliances and allegiances.

It is the modest objective of the present thesis to examine the mother-daughter relationship in Amy Tan's novels, with a perspective to highlight the dilemma of the Chinese American women. The study pinpoints the feminine struggles in diaspora and voices the resilience that these women develop through the extension of 'intersubjective' relationships. Amy Tan's novels present the capability of women to comprehend themselves as separate subjects within patriarchally defined social structures, to pose arguments with the societal conventions and traditions and to radicalize their selves in novel ways.

Chapter I

Introduction

It is true
I was created in you.
It is also true
That you were created for me.
I owned your voice
…
I thank you that
You still find something in me
To cherish, to admire and to love.
I thank you, Mother.
I love you.

(Angelou 1-5, 80-84)

The above lines from the poem "Mother, A Cradle to Hold Me" unveil the redefined definitions of maternal-filial love and freedom that remain rational to both mothers and daughters. The mother-daughter relationship as a crucial bond of women involves a matrilineal discourse which emphasizes a particular feminist schema. It is a "female political metaphor" which has "particular resonance within feminism" (Henry 11). The significance of matrilineal literature is that it explores and announces the necessity to reclaim and re-theorize the position of women within the society. The concept of motherhood and daughterhood is reiterated as something significant across cultures in world literatures, especially in Asian American women's writing.

The Asian American matrilineal writings are "the constructions of femininity in discourses of motherhood and daughterhood" (Hirsch, *The Mother-Daughter Plot* 8).

Asian American literature involves the distinct voices of the Asian Americans and amalgamates the experiences of Asians in their homeland and their embracement of exilic identity. It announces the potentialities of the literature to transcend the barriers of cultural and national boundaries. Asian American literature examines the possibilities in women diaspora by engaging with issues of gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity as part of Asian American matrilineal narratives. The stories of mothers and daughters in Asian American literature acquire great relevance as they are not just personal recollections and narratives, but emotive accounts of women placed in diverse vernacular and geological positions. The early feminist works of Asian American matrilineal literature focus upon the daughter centric narratives that privilege the daughters' voice over the mothers. Being the primal bond which negotiates women's social realities, the mother-daughter relationship contests "the emotional, political, economic, and symbolic structure of family and society" (202). The maternal-filial relationships depicted in Asian American matrilineal literature showcase the possible strategies employed by the female authors for constructing and articulating feminist solidarity. These female writers illustrate second generation daughters who perceive their ancestral histories through their conflicts with their own mothers. Asian American literature positions

mother-daughter bond as a prototypical location of feminist identity politics. The mothers and daughters in Asian American literature generate a sense of hybrid identity that diminishes their hyphenated statuses as they evolve into Asian American individuals. Apart from all varied demarcations and dissimilarities in the attitudes of mothers and daughters, they strive hard to define and develop new space that re-establishes the bond and strength between women.

In the landmark volume, *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* (1974), Frank Chin and his associates grouped Chinese American, Japanese American and Filipino American literature under the umbrella term 'Asian American' which included the writers of the Asian descent and who had later settled in the United States. The Chinese were the first Asians to migrate to the United States of America. The Gold Rush of 1848 and the substantial importation of manual workers to build the transcontinental railroad in the 1860 in Chinese history witnessed disrupted Chinese family units. The Policy of Exclusion (1882-1943) which prohibited the entry of Chinese labourers prevented the formation of Chinese families in the United States. Many of the migrated Chinese men who laboured up to twenty hours a day for livelihood were tormented by the Whites and the immigration officials. The women who remained in China jeopardized themselves voyaging alone to the United States were raped, abducted or forced to prostitution. This political situation lasted till the liberation of the Immigration Laws in 1965.

The term ‘Chinese American’ is of a recent coinage which refers to the descendants of Chinese ancestry residing permanently in the United States. The immigrant Chinese recorded their experiences in the collection of folk rhymes such as *Taishan geyao ji* (1969) by Chen Yuanzhu and *Meizhou Guangdong huaqiao liuchuan geyao huibian* (1970) by Hu Zhaozhong. These folk rhymes depict the harsh conditions and plight of the young Chinese immigrants in America who left their homeland in search of better life conditions. Another poetic collection, *Island* (1980) by Him Mark Lai illustrates the emotional voices of early Chinese immigrants which pronounce the early American hardships. Lee Yan Phou’s *My life in China and America* (1909), Huie Kin’s *Reminiscences* (1932), Lin Yutang’s *Chinatown Family* (1948) are some of the accepted key contributions to the Chinese American literary tradition. Though there are countable works in Chinese American literature, it is Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* (1976) which serves as a seminal Chinese American matrilineal text in many ways. The implication of mother-daughter plot in Chinese American women’s writing has a historically and socially specific context. Chinese American feminism entails matrilineage as indispensable for raising feminist consciousness. Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* is a lucidly powerful memoir about growing up Chinese in America. The book was well received by the American literary circles and was honoured with National Book Critics Circle Award for the best nonfiction in the year 1976. The text is anthologized in the following years and paved the way for

the upcoming writers to prove that Chinese American voices had a powerful resonance far ahead of the Chinatown or the vicinal enclaves of Chinese immigrants.

As a significant contribution to Chinese matrilineal literature, *The Woman Warrior* remains a reference work for contemporary writers such as Amy Tan and Fae Mynne Ng and for the new generation of Chinese American writers like Cleste Ng, Jeff Chang, Marie Lu and Jenny Zhang. These writers portrayed the nuances and ambiguities of diasporic identity which include plurality, syncretism and hybridity. The personal experiences of mother-daughter bond allowed these women writers to articulate the detailed expression of intimacy and distance, passion and violence authentically and candidly. The themes that recap in the works of the Chinese American writers include the cultural clashes amid China and America, questions of individuality and gender, intergenerational interactions, particularly between older, first generation Chinese mothers and their younger, American born second-generation daughters.

The Chinese American writers frequently focused on the Chinese American life, especially familial conflicts and issues of identity. Their novels assign to the Americanized children the task of individual aspiration and individuation whereas their parents remain to be the transmitters of traditional culture. As a sub-genre of familial relationships, the mother-daughter narratives in their texts examine immigrant women's experience and their daughters'

struggle for mutuality, recognition and reconciliation. The writers attempt to resolve the maternal-filial conflict by the daughters' apprehension of the maternal traumatic past which becomes a psychoanalytical revelation for the racial complexities of the American born daughter. The intergenerational problems rooted in the daughter's failure to decode maternal history dissolves by mother's talk story. The maternal talk stories in Tan's novels project China as a historical arena for women's anguishes and America as a space of mothers' revitalization through their own restoration and daughters' assimilation. Tan's texts celebrate the essentials of the maternal-filial sacrifices where in the mothers who faced subjugation at the hands of patriarchy bequeath to their daughters a treasured legacy of power and insight.

Amy Tan is one of the promising Chinese American writers whose works explore the different phases of mother-daughter relationship, especially the Chinese American feminine experience. Tan was born in Oakland, California, as the second daughter to the Chinese immigrants, John Tan and Daisy Tan. Tan is the second of the three children of her Mandarin-speaking first-generation parents who arrived at United States in 1949. Her father, John Tan, an electrical engineer and Baptist minister, travelled to the United States to escape the Chinese Civil War. Tan obtained Bachelor's and Master's in English and Linguistics from San Jose State University. She worked as a linguistic specialist for handicapped children, as a freelance writer and later joined a writing group. Her workaholic nature moved her to depression and

she became a frequent visitor of psychiatrist. In 1985, Tan read Louise Erdrich's novel *Love Medicine* (1984), a set of interwoven stories narrated by different generations of a Native American family, which influenced her and altercated her visions on life.

Another influence on her writings was her mother, Daisy Tan, whom Tan refers to as her muse. The chaotic life that Daisy led in China has served as a stimulus for Tan's novels. Daisy Tan was born into a wealthy family in Shanghai. After her father's death, Daisy's mother Jing-mei was raped by a rich man who made her his concubine. When she gave birth to a son, one of the man's wives took claim of the son. Jing-mei later committed suicide by swallowing opium. Years later, Daisy wedded a rude husband and had to abandon her three daughters in China to America in order to escape her husband. These past traumatic stories of Daisy Tan affected Amy Tan whose novels projected the sufferings of women in the forefront. The death of Daisy Tan was a disheartening episode in the life of Tan and she remains frequently haunted by her mother's sense of doom and relies on antidepressants. Tan became totally involved in writing after the unexpected death of Daisy and she voiced forth her mother's story in all the novels written thereafter. In an interview given to the newspaper, *The Hindu*, Tan recalls her bond with her mother:

> The more I understand myself, the more I understand my mother and my grandmother. I never knew my grandmother. She died in

> 1925, but I feel I know her. Things I recognise in myself that came from my mother, they came from my grandmother. You know, we often talk about getting rid of pain or overcoming pain, but there's something about pain you have to honour. That's what my mother did. She always wanted me to be her symbiotic twin. I did it… but I hated it, so I recognise it and some of this is unavoidable. It's embedded in my emotional core. (Tan)

In the year 1998, Tan contracted Lyme disease as a result of which she suffers from epileptic seizures. Tan was constantly worried at the transmission of the genomic legacy of psychological instability to her children as her grandmother committed suicide, mother threatened suicide often and she herself struggled with suicidal ideation. She suffered from depression and considered it suitable not to have children. The intensity of maternal sufferings and trauma precipitated Tan who feels the need to connect herself to the maternal past and ancestral land. In an interview given to Maya Jaggi for *The Guardian*, Tan states:

> I felt connected to that history and landscape, and to everything that formed my family and their past…. And my mother was extremely proud to feel needed to explain the world to me now, when all those years I'd had to translate for her. I found that she got into as many arguments with shopkeepers as she did in America - it had nothing to do with language; it was personality. (Tan)

Amy Tan has written six novels such as *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991), *The Hundred Secret Senses* (1995), *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001), *Saving Fish from Drowning* (2005) and *The Valley of Amazement* (2013). *The Moon Lady* (1992) and *Sagwa, the Chinese Siamese Cat* (1994) are two Children's classics with illustrations by Gretchen Schields. She has also written non-fiction books like *The Opposite of Fate: A Book of Musings* (2003), *Where the Past Begins: A Writer's Memoir* (2017) etc. Amy Tan's first bestseller, *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), adapted into a film of the same title by Wayne Wang, projects the stories of four pairs of mothers and daughters who struggle to locate their lives in San Francisco. *The Joy Luck Club* was nominated for the National Book Award and for the National Book Critics Circle Award in the year 1989. The book also bagged the Bay Area Book Reviewers Award for fiction as well as the Commonwealth Club Gold Award. The novel is translated into more than twenty languages including Chinese. Tan's second novel, *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991) deals extensively with the Chinese American female identity and contains many autobiographical elements, peculiarly the story of Pearl, the California-born daughter of mother Winnie who migrates to the United States to escape an abusive marriage and the Chinese civil war. In an interview with the American journalist, Katie Couric, for *NBC*, Tan states her connection to Pearl thus:

> [We] are actually similar in some ways. I was a speech and

> language specialist, just as Pearl was. And my father died when I was 15. But the most striking similarity… is our ignorance of our mother's past. And… for many, many years I didn't know anything about her life, about the abusive marriage and the children she had lost. (Tan)

The Kitchen God's Wife with a single mother-daughter pair (Winnie Louie - Pearl Louie Brandt) depicts an assiduous quest for female divinity that represents the female subjectivity. *The Hundred Secret Senses* (1995) focuses on the relationship between two sisters, Chinese-born Kwan and her younger sister, Chinese-American Olivia. In the novel, Tan details the workings of faith and fate in family relationships, especially in the bond between sisters. *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001), her fourth novel, recounts the gradual metamorphosis of the daughter Ruth from a naïve writer to a genuine author who acquires the ability to narrate matrilineal story in her own terms and in her own language. Tan's latest novel, *The Valley of Amazement* (2013), explores the similar theme of mother-daughter bond, but with a difference. The novel, set in historical China, portrays an American mother, Lulu and her half-Chinese daughter, Violet and the half-American granddaughter Flora. Contrary to her other novels, *The Valley of Amazement*, mostly set in the city of Shanghai, explores the distinctive lives of the courtesans.

Apart from these novels, Tan has also written many other works which include memoirs, children's classics and other prose works. The above-

mentioned novels of Amy Tan are prominent as they project the many private, ancestral and cultural conflicts between mothers and daughters. The narratives explicate the productive and destructive energies delivered by the individual consciousness of these women. In all the four novels, the mothers have the authoritative predisposition to defend the secrecy and the agony of their past traumas in addition to restructure novel ways for both themselves and their daughters to pass through tough circumstances. In the opinion of the critic Ben Xu, "Only when a Chinese person is uprooted from his or her culture and transplanted to an alien one does he or she become aware of the fluidity, proteanness, and insecurity of his or her self" (8).

Amy Tan's fictional space projects the difficulties confronted by the mothers and daughters within isolating social structures to retrieve a meaningful bond with each other. In the maternal attempts for self-representation, the stories which the mothers narrate to the daughters in the novels of Tan are fragmented narratives in shattered form and broken language. In the works of Tan, the relationship amid mothers and daughters progresses through the daughters' acknowledgement of maternal experiences which have always been cast-off by chauvinist, prejudiced and classist society. The daughters' in the novels struggle to create identities as they attempt to authorize their mothers' lives and experiences. The second-generation daughters in the texts consider America as their homeland and struggle to gain acceptance and approval from the racist dominant society which remains

unfamiliar and unacceptable to the Chinese mothers. The Americanized daughters initially reject their old fashioned Chinese mothers only to realize Chineseness as their ethnicity and China as their ancestral land.

In the novels, Amy Tan employs extensive construction of cultural memory with which the mothers and daughters access their matrilineage. Tan's novels accentuate the politics of representing cultural memory by re-counting memory. The daughters in her novels make suitable appropriations of their Chinese culture through the manipulation of the maternal memories as an ethnic medium. The assessment of cultural memory is significant to Tan as she interlaces the intricacies of gender and ethos into American history. Tan makes a conscious "effort to remember that is expressive to the need of the creative spaces" where she is able to "redeem and reclaim the past, legacies of pain, sufferings and triumph in ways that transform present reality" (hooks 50). The second generation daughters in Tan's texts connect with their Chinese mothers and foremothers through the device of memory. These women assert their identities in the dominant society through their collective memories and the preservation of ethnic culture preserved by their mothers. Tan's texts highlight the significance of maternal relationship in the lives of Chinese American women, but even then they do not project the fusion of identity, rather they demonstrate the empowerment and subjectivity of both women. The texts reject passive patriarchal mothering by inculcating empowered mothering into the feminist literary scholarship that defines the maternal experience as a

source of feminist consciousness.

Most of the events which Amy Tan narrates in her novels resonate with her personal life. The difficult relationship that Tan shared with her mother becomes the impetus for most of her brilliant portrayal of Chinese mothers and American daughters in her novels. Ignorant of her mother's life in China, Tan often misapprehends the actions and decisions of her mother, Daisy Tan. Tan's father and her older brother succumbed to brain tumors and Amy Tan moved to Switzerland along with her mother and her younger brother. During these years, Tan learns about her mother's previous marriage in China and her three abandoned girl children in Shanghai. Later Tan travels along with her mother to China to meet her half-sisters. Tan discovers the suicidal death of her grandmother who was raped and forced into concubinage in the early years of her life. All these affected Tan personally. In an interview given to Estelle Tang for Elle Magazine, Tan validates the maturation of her matrilineal connection:

> I was raised within what almost seems like a traditional structure of expectations and criticism but, I think more than that, I was raised by a mother who did want me to be my own person. She said that in so many ways, whether it related to her or not. She would tell me, for example: "You're not equal to a man. You and a man are not the same." She would say, "You're better, and you can never let anyone tell you who you are." She hated condescension; that was

> one of the key things that I remember about her. I don't think my mother left me with the mark of somebody who should be compliant. Quite the opposite, and because of what she went through and what her mother went through, that was more clearly the message to me growing up. (Tan)

In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Tan links an exploration of Chinese history with an imaginative restating of mother Winnie's story. Many episodes in the life of Winnie resonates with Daisy Tan, Tan's mother, who becomes the emotional inspiration for almost all her novels. In *The Opposite of Fate*, Tan resonates, "It is my mother's story in the most important of ways to me: her passion, her will, her hope, the innocence she never really lost" (Tan 211). Tan's representation of China is in many ways streaked with diasporic outlook of an individual occupied in the venture of re-imagination and re-establishment. In each of the select novels, characters like June, the daughter of the first mother-daughter pair in *The Joy Luck Club*, LuLing Young, the demented mother in *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, Winnie, the mother in *The Kitchen God's Wife*, and Lulu, the mother in *The Valley of Amazement* make either a physical or spiritual journey back to China in topography and history in order to re-evaluate and decode their troubled past.

When the socio-political contexts in China regulate the realities and experiences of Tan's women, the vital presence of America states the lives and self-conception of these women. For Tan's fictional mothers, America

provides prospects for fleeing from their "unspeakable tragedies" and traumatic pasts in China (*JLC* 20). Tan's female characters are enticed by the promises of the American Dream. Tan's preoccupation with the American Dream is clarified as one of the daughters of *The Joy Luck Club*, June discusses the American Dream of her mother, Suyuan thus:

> My mother believed you could do anything you wanted to be in America. You could open a restaurant. You could work for the government and get good retirement…. You could become rich. You could become instantly famous…. [It] was where all my mother's hopes lay. She had come here in 1949 after losing everything in China… [in America] there were so many ways for things to get better. (*JLC* 132)

The American life with limitless opportunities lures Tan's female characters towards America. The American experience marginalizes the first generation Chinese American women on the basis of racial difference and preconceived inferiority complex. The mothers' non-fluent English tongue alienates them from the American society and from their Americanized daughters who impulsively dismiss their maternal tongue and culture. In America, Tan's women craft a language which enables them to speak and write on their own by re-constructing and amalgamating the American English and Chinese Mandarin. In *The Opposite of Fate*, Tan discusses the merits of American existence which provides her creative incarnation: "[In America] I have the

freedom to write whatever I want. I claim that freedom" (*OPF* 316). In Tan's novels, America embodies both a locale of conflict and friction as well as autonomy and prospects. It is within the vistas of this dubious space that Tan's women characters negotiate their quest for reclamation and ascertain their identity.

Tan dedicated her novel *The Bonesetter's Daughter* to her mother and grandmother. In her dedication, Tan alludes to the spiritual presence of her mother and grandmother whom she regards as her guardian angels: "On the last day that my mother spent on earth, I learned her real name, as well as that of my grandmother. This book is dedicated to them" (*BSD ii*). Writing gives Tan the ultimate freedom of expression and thought. For Tan, writing is a therapy and an act of self-exploration and self-affirmation which offers her maternal memories and establishes the matrilineal connection. Tan discloses the reasons for her literal compositions in her memoir thus:

> Because I have qualities in my nature shaped by my past -- a secret legacy of suicide, forced marriages, and abandoned children in China; an eclectic upbringing that included no fewer than fifteen residences, ranging from tough neighbourhoods in Oakland, California, to the snobbish environs of Montreux, Switzerland; a distorted view of life shaped by two conflicting religions, the death of my father and brother in a year's time, and the murder of my best friend. Those elements and others in my life have combined to

> make me feel that writing provides the sort of freedom and danger, satisfaction and discomfort, truth and contradiction that I can't find anywhere else in this life. (*OPF* 322)

For Tan, the traumatic and ironic maternal memories remain a continual self-effacement of her cultural past. Tan's acceptance of her identity and her position within the Chinese American community leads to the discovery of her subjectivity.

Amy Tan's maternal-filial stories in her novels clarify Chinese women's diverse experiences, narrations and perspectives. The female stories flout the orientalist representation of Chinese American women by portraying them in their erratic density and authority. Her narratives signify women's attachments and coalitions with each other and integrate the prevailing stories of affection and struggle between mothers and daughters. In *Inter/View: Talks with America's Writing Women* (1990), Katherine Usher Henderson cites Tan's perceptive statement thus:

> The feeling is in Chinese culture that [the bond] can never be broken. Talking about mother-daughter relationships in general, Tan referred to "the metaphor of the umbilical cord… which gets stretched over time; whether it's the mother or daughter who severs it or tries to pull it tighter, part of that is individual and part is cultural. In a Chinese family the mother pulls very tightly on the bond.... The notion that your mother puts everything in your mind

> -- the blank slate theory -- is part of Chinese culture. (qtd. in Pearlman and Henderson 16)

Tan announces the linkage between matrilineal culture and legacy by incorporating Chinese myths in a refreshed perspective. Tan participates in the project of revisionist myth making in which traditional myths are reconditioned and modified. In her novels, Tan criticizes the patriarchal Chinese myths and histories and attempts at reworking the myths from a feminine perspective. The folk deities are given a feminist spin by Tan to embolden the subjugated women characters in China and America. The popular Chinese myths of The Moon Lady and The Kitchen God are given diverse interpretations by Tan. The myth of the Moon Lady and the Kitchen God are patriarchal myths which divinize male persona and establish gender polarization. She explores the possibilities of a feminist revision of gender mythologies. Tan substitutes a female goddess in the place of the patriarchal male deity, the Kitchen God. The gender reversal of patriarchal mythical God indicates Tan's revolutionary potential to counter the phallocentric system. Tan believes that it is possible to alter unconscious male illusions about woman through a feminist project of appropriating myths. As Tan challenges patriarchal myths, she empowers women to subversively utilize their borderline position to unsettle phallocentric representations.

Amy Tan explores the ways in which her narratives work to construct the female self and subjectivity. Tan validates the disputes that remain vital for the

hyphenated Americans who encounter with multiple cross-cultural sets of expectations and experiences. In her works, Tan examines problems related to ethnicity, gender and identity. She vocalizes the conflicts of diasporic culture, the features of biculturalism, cultural dislocation and acculturation, adherence to ancestral tradition, assimilation and parochialism. She portrays the second-generation American as quintessence of contested space, ethnic and radical crossings, and queries of personal and domestic allegiances. Tan's texts on a wider scale prove the common man's struggle to establish a distinct identity, search for cultural roots and disrupted familial connections, the hostilities and bonds between generations, the shape of women's lives in patriarchal cultures and the significance to form a connection between the past, present and future.

Amy Tan's novels defy the historically prevalent misogynistic practices within traditional Chinese culture like foot binding, concubinage and female slavery. Tan's works highlight the viciousness of the Confucian system and project the traditional subordination of women in the family to survive within the Chinese culture. Foot binding is the age old Chinese tradition which symbolizes the repression of women in Chinese patriarchal society. It began as a custom in the imperial court, between the end of the Tang Dynasty and the beginning of the Song Dynasty. According to the custom, the feet of the young girls are tightly bound to deform the shape of their feet. The mothers bound the feet of the young girls at a very young age which lasts up to around fifteen to twenty years. The bound feet decorously labelled as 'three-inch

golden lilies' (*san-tsun-gin-lian*) become the epitome of feminine beauty that increases daughters' worth in marriage. The women in China rushed themselves to accept this torture because "... it presents a unique opportunity to gain the respect and recognition of the in-laws, who will praise the beautiful tiny feet even beyond her dowry, as an undeniable proof of her capacity to suffer and obey" (Kristeva, *About Chinese Women* 82). In reality, the sexual adoration of small deformed feet represents the Confucian patriarchal perversion which limited the mobility of women and resultant permanent infirmities. One of Tan's characters, Precious Auntie in *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, leaves her feet unbound at the price of her marriageability. In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Tan's depiction of the coddled daughter Peanut imitates the crippling of foot binding in the fashions of 1920s. The liberated feet in Tan's fiction allows the women protagonists to communicate the oppressive burden of their legacy in the United States and in the self-assertion of their fluid multiethnic identities.

Amy Tan's texts project the system of concubinage which existed in the Chinese feudal culture. It is an accepted practice which allows men to take on many wives apart from the first wife. This custom bestows men with privileges of choice and could take as many women as wives when the first wife fails to bear a male child to the family. More than a sexual privilege, the implication of male heir was the essential expression of the virtue of filial piety authorized by law. In Tan's novels, concubinage is portrayed as a tool of male dominance and female humiliation which has a hostile influence on their lives

and psyche. In *The Joy Luck Club*, An-Mei's mother is a concubine who commits suicide for reserving a better position for An-Mei and her brother. In *The Valley of Amazement*, courtesan Violet becomes the concubine of Perpetual and suffers many hardships in his home. In a specific context in *The Joy Luck Club*, An-Mei describes the social reality that informs the background of Chinese women: "… I was raised the Chinese way: I was taught to desire nothing, to swallow other people's misery, to eat my own bitterness" (*JLC* 215). Tan emphasizes the psychological attitude of Chinese women who consciously and unconsciously conform to the gynophobic views of women. Tan's women characters, as they arrive at certain levels of personal growth and self-realization, liberate themselves from the "cramped confines of patriarchal space" and recast their lives (Showalter 201). Tan chronicles the agony and struggles in maternal-filial relationships as the counter effect of hegemonic treatises that silence their voices. Her talk-stories explore the psychological and physical tendencies of the Chinese mothers and their American-born daughters as they progress like forerunners straggling painful life histories.

As the literary purveyor of Chinese American mother-daughter bond, Tan demarcates the progress of Chinese American women's writings. For Tan, the geography of China forms a family-referred fictional entity which represents an unidentified cipher of adequate and prohibited behaviour, enigmatic folk ceremonies and unfamiliar language with multiple synonyms and pronunciations. She undertakes a re-examination of Chinese history, capture

the migrant experience, interpret the Chinese culture and distinguish Chinese and American cultures through the elaborate narration of mother-daughter stories. Tan resorts to the historical texts for the authentic descriptions of the historic events like the Rape of Nanking, Taiping Rebellion, and many other significant moments in Chinese history.

The female friendships act as foils to the mother-daughter relationships in Tan's novels. Tan deals with the gender issues of women, which is better comprehended through the lens of maternal-filial relationship. It allows an acute perception of the complexity of female bonding and the issues of solidarity and sisterhood. The maternal-filial bond in Tan's texts serves the double purpose of altering the lacuna in the patriarchal society and simultaneously nurturing awareness in society about how the female lives are molded and influenced by their interaction with other women. The novels effectively incorporate the network of female friendships that allow them to lessen their seclusion and enable them to develop a feminine support system. There are even exploitative relationships among women that lead to feminine disruptiveness and enmity. The novels of Tan portray the feminine world as a conducive to female empowerment and conversely to women's divisiveness.

Tan's women characters formulate Chinese American identity which is far distinct from the orientalist stereotypes propagated through the mainstream media. The mothers and daughters in her novels develop keenness towards Chinese American history against dual marginalisation by historical discourse.

Tan correlates the Chinese American history in the form of Chinese 'talk-story' soliciting maternal help. In the texts, listening to maternal stories becomes a feminine act of absorbing information and formulating responses based on the analysis of that information. The oral stories combine autobiography, memoir, history and mythology in distinctive manner in a way that it demonstrates the syncretism of Chinese and American cultures. Elizabeth Brown-Guillory claims that, as a "mother looks at her daughter, she sees herself. She is constantly reminded of her mistakes, yearnings, dreams, success and failures" (2). Amy Tan's mothers go through the experience of forced or voluntary immigration to another country which triggers many psychological changes and anxieties. In Tan's novels, the intergenerational transmission of maternal trauma and psychological transformation prompted by migration influence their parenting and other relationships. The mothers like An-Mei, Lindo and Ying-Ying experience post-traumatic stress, lamentation, desolate, and acculturative stress during the early period of migration. Later, they psychologically reorganize themselves to adapt themselves to the dominant culture while preserving the behaviours and customs of their native culture.

In her novels, Tan demonstrates interracial romance and relationships which indicate two things -- racial self-hatred and the desire to assimilate with the dominant culture. The interracial relationships with Caucasian men allow the daughters in the texts to (de)construct their Chinese American identity. Through the representation of Chinese and Euro American men, Tan criticizes

the negativities of both Chinese and American patriarchies. Along with the maternal-filial narratives, Tan recovers the father-daughter stories of Chinese-American men who re-form themselves as part of a hyphenated world. The stories of Tan represent Chinese American fathers as men struggling to deal with the pain, rejection and dislocation of the past.

Amy Tan's fictional mothers and daughters engage in convoluted psychosomatic activities like domination and submission which take place in presence of both. The maternal domination and filial submission in Tan's texts are intersubjective processes that hinge on the psychological need and capability for recognition and assertion. The patterns of domination and submission allow Tan's mothers and daughters to redefine their relationship. The throngs of domination and submission occur in maternal-filial relationships in Tan's texts owing to the desire for recognition and assimilation. Tan's women comprehend real mother-daughter love as "recognition on the part of each of the separateness of the other, and the respect for the other" (Friday 48).

Amy Tan's texts endorse the mother-daughter bond as a significant entity for intersubjective recognition where in woman reclaims subjectivity in another woman's physical and emotional presence. The maternal-filial selves can be analysed from distinct contexts through the primary positive model of mutual intersubjective relations: the objectification of Chinese Mothers, the mothers' attempt to reclaim subjectivity through revisionist myth making and their final

attempts to establish intersubjective relationships with daughter. Tan's fictional Chinese mothers' anxiety about daughters' welfare and security estrange them as the daughters consider maternal fears as obsolete and their observations and arguments as "invalid in changing social times" (Brown-Guillory 2). Tan's Chinese American mothers and daughters share a unique affection-aversion dyad in which the mothers are initially resented by the daughters as the mothers try to inscribe a better life for their daughters. Later, as daughters encounter points of convergence amid their personal lives, they realize the significance of matriarchal legacy.

In Tan's novels, the mothers and daughters at familial locales, obfuscated by race, gender, sexuality, and socio-economic issues, structure and restructure their comprehensions of the differed self in relation to manifold home places and frontiers. She foregrounds the maternal voice where in the mothers' voices are filtered within and through daughters' narrative voices. Tan's novels illustrates Benjamin's concept of "intersubjectivity" according to which "the individual grows in and through the relationship to other subjects" (*The Bonds of Love* 20). The mothers and daughters in Tan's novels discern that "the [m]other whom the self [daughter] meets is also a self, a subject in… her own right" (20). They share "similar mental experiences" and reorients "the conception of the psychic world from a subject's relation to its object toward a subject meeting another subject" (20). The mothers and daughters, as they reach the phase of mutual recognition treats each other as subjects and

realizes the necessity for emotional and spiritual recognition. The deciphering of the traumatic maternal past allows the daughters in Tan's narrative space to appreciate mothers as independent subjects and not as "external world" or "adjunct[s] of [their] ego" (23). These women attain "attunement" (understand and being understood) as they experience "pleasure in being with the other" (30-33). The daughters in Tan's novels, as they enter into feminist attunement with their mothers, experience "co-feeling" which is "the ability to share feelings and intentions without demanding control, to experience sameness without obliterating difference" (48).

Tan treats the ambiguities of the bicultural life by examining the state of 'dual consciousness' as experienced by the mothers and daughters in her novels. In Tan's works, the dual consciousness represents the mental condition grounded on dichotomy that exist in racial minorities (Chinese American mothers and daughters) owing to the struggle between ancestral culture and the dominant mainstream American culture. In Tan's stories, the feminine consciousness of mothers and daughters experience a sense of dilemma as they are given no alternatives within American culture. Tan's immigrant women endure the condition of "double consciousness" wherein they evaluate their selves "through the eyes of others" and assess their "soul[s] by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (Du Bois 8). In the novels of Tan, the "double consciousness" positions the Chinese immigrants in an ambivalent state where their identity, subjectivity and individuality become

entities to be restructured and redefined.

The novels of Tan represent the quest for identity which cross-examines questions of relocation, transnationalism and subjectivity through a diasporic lens. The diasporic outlook provides the necessary framework for analyzing the feminist double consciousness -- of both being a female and a migrant -- and the feminist contestations of patriarchy, disenfranchisement, citizenship and exile. The select novels of Tan are grounded on the realities of the Chinese American immigrant experience where in the immigrant women undertake new identities and become stronger and influential than the male figures. Tan's texts highlight the constant and conscious effort to reconstruct mothering and daughtering as sites of defiance, emancipation and fluid subjectivity which provide mothers and daughters with the feelings of seclusion and denunciation. In the novels of Tan, reclaiming motherhood and a radical reconstruction of matriarchy fortify Chinese American daughters and the future generations. Unleashing the chains of the predefined notions of motherhood, the daughters in the novels liberate themselves through their maternal revisions. For the daughters in these texts, motherhood empower as it unfollows the patriarchal model practiced and reinforced by their mothers. In *The Bonesetter's Daughter* and *The Valley of Amazement*, the presence of a third maternal figure (grandmother) who facilitates and at times complicates the maternal-filial relationship. As the daughters reclaim and rewrite motherhood, they even reclaim their maternal grandmothers. In *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, the

grandmother Precious Auntie offers her granddaughter Ruth an alternative vision for self-identity and subjectivity. In *The Valley of Amazement*, the grandmother, Lulu's fierce and protective love for Flora, grants her the ability to comprehend her half-Chinese identity. In these novels, Tan rewrites maternal-filial relationship outside the periphery of patriarchally defined maternal dualities.

The thesis consists of six chapters in total, including introduction and conclusion. Each of the four core chapters deal with four different criteria -- 'talk-story,' 'oral storytelling,' 'memoir' and 'epistolary writing' -- which the mothers and daughters employ for gaining intersubjectivity. Each of the chapters explores the mother-daughter relationship in *The Joy Luck Club*, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, *The Bonesetter's Daughter* and *The Valley of Amazement* from different perspectives and sheds light on a different facet of the relationship. The analysis offers additional insights into Chinese American women's matrilineal writing and the significance of maternal presence in the lives of the daughters. The thesis places a great emphasis on the intergenerational relationships, especially between mothers, daughters and maternal grandmothers. In all the four select novels, the thesis examines an overarching concept of intersubjectivity that builds a positive identity in women, especially mothers and daughters. As the study examines the intersubjective connection of female characters, it demonstrates the viable and legitimate subjectivity of Chinese American women. The intersubjective

contact established through the means of active communication between mothers and daughters provides them with refurbished subjectivity and identity.

The present study attempts to enhance the Chinese American literary scholarship by pinpointing Amy Tan's attempts to modify the record of maternity outside the periphery of the existing western discourses which project the Chinese mothers as passive and the ensuing mother-daughter bond as a source of irritation, anxiety and torment. Amy Tan engages in the representation of Chinese American mother-daughter relationships as a means through which both mothers and daughters achieve subjectivities and identities. The detailed study of mother-daughter relationship in the texts illuminates how the diasporic Chinese Americans and American society act on and respond to each other. Her works reflect the intimate aspects of the Chinese culture and society, particularly the ideology and the inner realms of Chinese patriarchy and its influence on women.

The mother-daughter relationship in the study illustrates the maternal bond as complex as a result of shared but distinct experiences. The select texts display unique emotional expression of mother-daughter relationships in Chinese American families and how their family dynamics represent, reflect and influence the Chinese American identity. In exploring the topic, the study adopts a new perspective on Chinese American mothering -- the significance of matriarch in the filial identity formation -- while filling the void in the existing scholarship about relationships amid mothers and daughters in Chinese

American families. The select texts of Amy Tan focus on the daughters' quest for their identities, the quests in which the mother-daughter bond remain fundamental and it continues to be the leading configuring code of feminine identity in Asian American cultures.

Chapter II

Métissage of Maternal-Filial Perspectives: *The Joy Luck Club*

The Joy Luck Club (1989) valorises the significance of maternal stories that highlights the negotiation of feminine perspectives and the enhancement of emotional rapport among the mother-daughter participants. The novel platforms the life stories of four Chinese mothers and their American daughters in the city of San Francisco. The women in the text utilize the device of storytelling to share their ethnic experiences that transform the naïve, self-defensive daughters into erudite individuals who appreciate and accept Chinese cultures and manners. In the novel, Tan projects storytelling as a "phase of communication" and "the natural form for revealing life" that refines the cultural consciousness among the mothers and daughters (Minh-ha 123). Amy Tan's mothers and daughters in the text undertake a selective retrieval and verbalization of information from memory which synthesize their traumatic experiences in the organization of a vernacular narrative performance.

The mothers and daughters in *The Joy Luck Club* represent the global female community who share similar emotional resonances, inner conflicts and psychological traumas. The maternal storytelling in the novel constructs identities, creates histories and conveys diverse cultural ethos. The mothers

use the power of storytelling to fortify their daughters' Chinese cultural affiliation. The female storytellers -- mothers and daughters -- in the text exemplify how their narration brings out a balance between their reminiscences and their context of narration which generate a rational verbal performance. The intergenerational stories of the women in the narrative "provide reinscriptions of the daily making of culture, community, and subjectivity which counter those defined for them in masculinist and imperialist terms" (Ho 150).

The Joy Luck Club foregrounds an emotional rivalry between mothers and daughters who struggle to find poise between their ethnic culture and the dominant mainstream American culture. Written in the form of a spasmodic narrative, Amy Tan projects the consciousness of eight women while emphasizing the fragmentation of their identity under the hassles of racism, sexism and patriarchy. As the women protagonists in the text announce the intricacies of their personal relationships, they reveal the disputes of community, group individuality and cohesion beside cultural, ethnic and conventional lines. The transgenerational transmission of past experiences in the text involves a matrilineal representation of history and memory that recovers and re-voices the mother-daughter experiences which harmonized the conflicted maternal-filial bond.

The Joy Luck Club presents the lives of four first generation Chinese women who leave China for various reasons during 1940s and their

Americanized second-generation daughters. Set in the pre-World War II China and contemporary San Francisco, *The Joy Luck Club* centres on four mother-daughter pairs: Suyuan Woo -- Jing-Mei Woo (June), An-Mei Hsu -- Rose Hsu Jordan, Lindo Jong -- Waverly Jong and Ying-Ying St. Clair -- Lena St. Clair. The stories of these eight women are interwoven in four distinct segments that open with a vignette, followed by four chapters. Presenting sixteen stories of eight women, the novel outlines the mother-daughter bond as a map for the intricate and enclosed cross identifications amid the mothers and daughters. It melds the cultural narrative with the variances inherent to the mother-daughter relationship.

The novel commences with the thirty-six-year-old daughter, June/ Jing-Mei, occupying her dead mother's place at the east side of the table, playing mah-jong with the other three Chinese mothers on the occasion of the meeting of their social gathering called the Joy Luck Club. As the mothers play the tile game they share stories of their past and grieve for the hidden barriers that separate them from their daughters. The four chapters such as "The Joy Luck Club," "Two Kinds," "Best Quality" and "A Pair of Tickets" detail the life stories of the first mother-daughter pair, Suyuan and June. Suyuan Woo, the matriarch of the Joy Luck Club escapes war-ravaged China leaving her twin baby daughters behind and lives with her new husband Canning Woo and daughter June. She is frequently reminded of her irrevocable losses in China. June who works as a copy writer for a small advertising firm lacks

her mother Suyuan's self-assurance and determination. After Suyuan's death, as June travels to China with her father and meets the long-lost twin half-sisters, she realizes the significance of her mother and her ancestral land, China in her life.

The next set of chapters titled "Scar," "Rules of the Game," Four Directions" and "Magpies" chronicle the tale of the second pair, An-Mei and Rose. As the daughter of a concubine, An-Mei undergoes emotional tantrums during her childhood days in China. The chapters also portray the conflicted relationship with her daughter Rose who is on the verge of filing a divorce petition against her husband. "The Red Candle," "Half and Half," "Four Directions" and "Double Face" project the struggles of young Lindo as the daughter in law of a Chinese patriarchal family and the daring escape made by her who later travels to America and starts a new life in the city of San Francisco. It also presents the conflict between the strict Chinese mother Lindo and her Chess prodigy, Waverly. The last mother-daughter pair, Ying-Ying St. Clair and Lena St. Clair, narrates their life events in four chapters titled "The Moon Lady," "The Voice from the Wall," "Rice Husband" and "Waiting Between the Trees." The chapters describe Ying-Ying's unpleasant moments in China and her migration to America. It also details her daughter Lena's distressed married life and her inner conflicts with her mother. The mothers narrate the first and last segments of the narrative and the daughters recount the middle segments. Compiling the maternal and filial voices in a

progressive manner, Amy Tan blends their "double voice" to "yield a female multiple consciousness" and modify their existence so as to "live afresh" (Hirsch, *The Mother-Daughter Plot* 161).

The Joy Luck Club confirms to the tradition of Chinese talk-story culture which becomes the female outlet of familial narratives, stories and testimonies that reclaim feminine history and culture. In the diasporic locale of San Francisco, talk-story becomes the language of diasporic *métissage* that celebrates the cultural intermixing of maternal-filial perspectives. It forms the significant strategy that forges a sense of belonging and identity through the shared narratives of mothers and daughters. The maternal participation in the talk-story tradition bespeaks the feature of code bearing, which indicates the inclusion of cultural messages within the narratives. The folk story tradition, conventionally known as 'talk-story' (*gong gutsai*) is "a conservative, communal folk art by and for the common people, performed in the various dialects of diverse ethnic enclaves and never intended for the ears of non-Chinese" (Sledge 143). For the mothers and daughters in the novel, "it served to redefine an embattled immigrant culture by providing its members immediate, ceremonial access to ancient lore, talk story retained the structures of Chinese oral wisdom (parables, proverbs, formulaic description, heroic biography, casuistical dialogue) long after other old-country traditions had died" (143). As a discursive mode and a feminine practice, the talk-story in *The Joy Luck Club* delineates the personal and convoluted relationship

between mothers and daughters and establishes the paramount significance of maternal pasts in the lives of daughters. The maternal stories, framed by trauma and loss, reveal a glimpse of their life in pre-war and post-war China, their life within Chinese patriarchy and their fortitude in rebuilding their lives after displacement from their homeland. The deliverance of the maternal stories as personal testimonies which convey the individual, familial and communal histories allows Tan to situate the mothers within the broader context of the Chinese diaspora. The stories communicated within the domestic familial spaces become dynamic to their connection as women and vital to the radical mobilization of community.

The novel begins with a reflection on maternal loss -- death of Suyuan Woo, the first mother of the four mother-daughter pairs. Suyuan's story unfolds through the melancholic remembrance of her daughter June. As the founder of the Joy Luck Club which is formed as a survival strategy for the immigrant Chinese women, Suyuan becomes the guardian of Chinese culture and traditions. The club becomes a kind of prospect and bequest for the four mothers who want to transfer a sense of promising hope to their daughters. The daughters initially consider the club as a "shameful Chinese custom, like the secret gathering of the Ku Klux Klan or the tom-tom dances of TV Indians preparing for war" (*JLC* 28). Later the club forms an enroute for daughter June's descent to her maternal land, China. The mothers' hope to include their daughters in the club thereby enlarges the scope of the gathering

which interprets their emotional responses of critical events in their lives.

In *The Joy Luck Club*, Amy Tan utilizes memory as the ideal vehicle of matrilineage and initiates the discussion about the hypothetical memory as the parameter of ethnic identity. The maternal stories are recounted from the mothers' past lives in their ancestral land, China. The ethnic memory of the daughters and mothers relies on the cultural memory of the diasporic condition labelled by Hirsch as "post memory" (*Family Frames* 22). The four daughters in the novel experience "post memory" as they "grew up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated" (22). The "post memory" in the novel becomes the tool that generate intergenerational links through refined intersubjective bonds. Their endeavour to achieve identity and individuality by attempting to locate themselves in the land of cultural and diasporic memories enables them to strengthen their bonds with their mothers. The cultural memory in the novel, "continues to speak to us. But it no longer addresses us as simple, factual 'past,' since our relation to it, like the child's relation to the mother, is always-already 'after the break'" (Hall 395). In the fictional space of *The Joy Luck Club*, it is structured through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth. "Cultural identities" act as "points of identification, the unstable points of identification or future, which are made within the discourses of history and culture" (395).

In the text, the transference of cultural memories is mediated through the bestowal of various symbols that allow the mothers to enrich the daughters' consciousness. Suyuan imparts to June her "life's importance" through her gifting of the precious jade pendant (*JLC* 208). The jade pendant embodies legacy, memory and a strong sense of eternal trust that Suyuan wishes to transfer to June. As Suyuan puts it, "For a long time, I wanted to give you this necklace. See, I wore this on my skin, so when you put this on your skin, then you know my meaning. This is your life's importance" (208). As time progresses the symbolic meaning of the pendant changes from a big greenish ornate stone to a precious relic of maternal heritage that has the power to add glory to her mental strength. June ruminates: "But these days I think about my life's importance. I wonder what it means…. And she's the only person I could have asked, to tell me about life's importance, to help me understand my grief" (197). Lindo transcends her soul's "invisible strength" by presenting Waverly her most precious "chang (mascot), a small tablet of red jade which held the sun's fire" (96). An-Mei inherits "a ring of watery blue sapphire" from her mother which she later sacrifices to recover her son (129). All these pieces of jewellery such as the jade pendant, the tablet of red jade and the ring of watery blue sapphire symbolize evocative and sentient maternal warmth and signify the mothers' continual presence in the lives of the daughters.

The Joy Luck Club positions the "dual possibility" of language where in

the maternal language "assert[s] a true and universality of persons" and "institute[s] a hierarchy" that allow the mothers to communicate to their daughters (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 164). The second generation daughters who remain ignorant of their maternal language, "by virtue of their exclusion from the universal point of view cannot "speak" without simultaneously deauthorizing ... [maternal] speech" (164). Trapped between two cultures and languages, the mothers and daughters in the text seem to be "inarticulate, almost paralyzed in their ability to direct their energies towards resolving what seems to them an insoluble conflict" (Allen 65). While conversing to their daughters in a mixed tongue, the four mothers attempt to outline their ethnic identity by sustaining their linguistic identity. As the mothers construct their linguistic identity, they nonverbally outcry the message: "I am my language. Until I take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself...." (Anzaldúa 81).

Along with the evaluation of the generational differences, the mother-daughter plot in the text allows an exploration of their linguistic dissimilarities. Their use of different languages is emblematic of the different cultural affiliation they attribute to themselves and each other. The mothers' 'language of the borderlands,' a *patois* of Chinese Mandarin and English perplexes and bewilders the daughters who speak perfect American English. The mothers' "code-switching" of languages as a means of "identity negotiation" serves as a supportive factor for their ethnic language

maintenance (Chowdhary and Marlina 99). The linguistic switching from English to Chinese signifies maternal anger and refutation of daughters' inefficiencies. Suyuan switching her language from English to Chinese to display her sense of distress at June's inefficiency in piano playing, Ying-Ying's references to her daughter's profession as "arty-tecky" instead of architect and An-Mei's mention of Rose's psychiatrist as "psyche-tricks" announce their cloaked criticisms of their Americanized daughters. The mothers and daughters in the novel conceptualize the idea that,

> If we continue to speak the same language to each other, we will reproduce the same story.... Same arguments, same quarrels, same scenes.... Same difficulties, the impossibility of reaching each other.... If we continue to speak this sameness, if we speak to each other as men have been doing for centuries, as we have been taught to speak, we'll miss each other, fail ourselves (Irigaray and Burke 69).

The linguistic variants between mothers and daughters in *The Joy Luck Club* serve as powerful indicators of feminine ethnic identity. The Chinese language, Mandarin and American English become the objectifying lens of feminine potential as they open up the possibilities for mutual indulgence. When June shares her inability to talk about her mother Suyuan to her half-sisters, she specifies the dilemma encountered by the second-generation daughters. The unfamiliar maternal tongue that bears the residues or traces of maternal body

distances June from the maternal culture and traditions. She discloses her dilemma to the joy luck mothers when she says, “What will I say? What can I tell them about my mother? I don’t know anything. She was my mother” (*JLC* 40). Her inability to recognize her mother and her incompetence to recite the story of her cultural memory act as a testament to her life long struggle with the mother and her degree of estrangement from the ethnic culture. June’s reminiscences of her mother’s indictment -- “you don’t even know little percent of me! How can you be me?” testifies her inability to reach her mother’s emotional world in a meaningful way (27). Her assertion, “I can never remember things I didn’t understand in the first place” foregrounds the conundrum experienced by the Chinese American daughters who apprehend the truth that their cultural heritage can be embraced only when they could comprehend their mother’s past (19).

June’s incompetence to relate to her cultural memory can be traced to her uncertainties regarding the Chinese heritage and maternal culture. It outlines the degree of alienation and dissension from her mother. After Suyuan’s death, June identifies her failure to enter into a psychological unison with the mother. As June plays the mah-jong tile game with the other three mothers, she comprehends the insecurities faced by them as mothers:

> They are frightened. In me, they see their own daughters, just as ignorant, just as unmindful of all the truths and hopes they have brought to America. They see their daughters who grow impatient

> when their mothers talk in Chinese, who think they are stupid when they explain things in fractured English.... They see daughters who will bear grandchildren born without any connecting hope passed from generation to generation. (40-41)

The maternal bilingualism in the novel serves as a form of feminine "self-inscription" defined as the "focal point of cultural consciousness and social change" that engenders subjectivity (Lavie and Swedenburg 41). As June notices the joy luck aunties, she realizes the speciality of their linguistic performance: "The Joy Luck aunties begin to make a small talk, not really listening to each other. They speak in their special language, half in broken English, half in their on Chinese dialect" (*JLC* 34). The maternal strategy of the deliberate inclusion of Chinese words represents "a subversive gesture" which suggests "an alternative form of speech which can both disrupt the repressions of authoritative discourse" while announcing novel themes that seem to be invisible in the American language (Shoshan 164). The mother Ying-Ying articulates her wild and stubborn nature to her daughter Lena through a single Chinese word, "*lihai*" which she explains has no equivalent English synonym (*JLC* 243). She explains her power of "*chuming*" ("inside knowledge of things") with which she apprehends her tiger spirit within her (248). In the chapter "Half and Half," Rose points out the verbatim, "*nengkan*" to describe her mother An-mei's capability to do anything she puts her mind to (121). The surmountable spirit within her allows An-Mei to call upon her

son Bing's spirit after his accidental death. Her "*nengkan*" allows her to express her concern over Rose's disoriented married life: "When something that violent hits you, you can't help but lose our balance and fall. And after you pick yourself up, you realize you can't trust anybody to save you—not your husband, not your mother, not God" (121). Rose's validation of the maternal comment that the psychiatrist makes Rose *hulihudu* and *heimongmong*, showcase her transplantation into Chinese culture. She comments: "It is true. And everything around me seemed to be *heimongmong*. These were words I have never thought about in English terms. I suppose the closest in meaning would be 'confused' and 'dark fog'" (188). The absence of exact English translation for the Chinese words like *lihai, chuming, nengkan, hulihudu* and *heimongmong* demonstrates the inherent ambivalence and versatility of the Chinese language.

Amy Tan deploys the technique of mirroring as a textual strategy that capacitates the female protagonists to rediscover their diffuse sense of selves. The mothers and daughters in the text examine the repercussions of their subjectivities by analysing their multiplied selves as highlighted by mirrors. The trope of mirror projects the incoherence between diverse modes of the feminine self. The bisected selves identify their discrepancy and identity crisis particular to the bicultural, multi-ethnic personages. For June, the mirror becomes an analogue in investigating the possibilities for looking beyond the restrictive mandates of her 'self.' June narrates:

> I looked at my reflection, blinking so I could see more clearly. The girl staring back at me was angry, powerful. This girl and I were the same. I had new thoughts, wilful thoughts, or rather thoughts filled with lots of won'ts. I won't let her change me, I promised myself. I won't be what I'm not. (134)

June liberates herself from all preconceived notions about her 'self' and her identity once she visualizes her reflection in the mirror. For her, mirror forms a channel that sieves her hidden potential subsided by the spectacles of matriarchal order.

Lindo considers mirror as an imaginary/ideological force that takes part in the process of recognition/ identification and the formation of gendered self-consciousness. In China, Lindo takes control of her fate once she gazes into the mirror which encourages her to walk out from her disastrous wedlock and surpass the cultural images as determined by the patriarchal ideologies. Lindo attempts to sustain and maintain a multiple positioning in spite of the hardships in China and America through her gaze at the mirror. In the chapter titled "The Red Candle," Lindo reflects:

> I wiped my eyes and looked in the mirror. I was surprised at what I saw. I had on a beautiful red dress, but what I saw was even more valuable. I was strong. I was pure. I had genuine thoughts inside that no one could see, that no one could ever take away from me. I was like the wind. I threw my head back and smiled proudly to myself.

> And then I draped the large embroidered red scarf over my face and covered these thoughts up. But underneath the scarf I still knew who I was. (*JLC* 58)

The ability to channelize her inner strength to challenge Chinese patriarchy sensitizes her to develop strategic perseverance skills. Later, in America, in a beauty parlour incident, the racial gaze of the hair dresser and Waverly's awareness of his stare decode the prevalent mental makeup of the Americans about the first generation Chinese. Waverly's female gaze projects her desire to Americanize her mother's appearance through hairdressing. Rory's comment on the uncanny facial resemblance between Lindo and Waverly disturbs Waverly, while Lindo finds a consolation in the remark. Waverly is ignorant of her mother's sentiments: "I am ashamed she is ashamed. Because she is my daughter and I am proud of her, and I am her mother but she is not proud of me" (255). Lindo discovers, in her daughter's face, a reiteration of her life and a consciousness that leads to the internal flashback to her homeland, China. The reflected images of the mother and daughter in the mirror emanate unshared messages about their ethnicity. As they look into the same mirror, Lindo confirms her status as an exotic ethnic other while Waverly sensitizes her Chineseness within her constructed American version. Lindo's lack of subjectivity creates polarity in Waverly's mind who considers any pathological "identification with [mother] involves a loss of self" (Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love* 171). But later, in Waverly, "the experience of giving birth" to Shoshana

"stirs deep reverberations of her mother" (Rich 220). The refreshed insights of maternal sentiments develop in her the maternal warmth and empathy that demonstrates the influence of her mothering on her emotional contentment. One such instance is when Waverly claims that,

> Because Shoshana really was a miracle. She was perfect. I found every detail about her to be remarkable, especially the way she flexed and curled her fingers. From the very moment she flung her fist away from her mouth to cry, I knew my feelings for her were inviolable. (*JLC* 175)

The mirror that reinforces the dual identities of the women projects the fluidness of their identities.

In *The Joy Luck Club*, the act of mothering functions as a 'reciprocal activity' where in the other mothers, taking the position of absent mother, step into the circle of matriarchy. The death of mother Suyuan invites the other three joy luck mothers to enter into a realm of mothering reciprocity. The Joy Luck Club formed by Suyuan finally becomes the enroute for June's descent to her ancestral land. An-Mei reminds June that her mother is in her bones and it is hardly difficult for her to comprehend her mother's speculations. Ying-Ying triumphs in compelling June to relive her past and her mother's untold agonies, through a new lens:

> Your mother was a very strong woman, a good mother. She loved you very much, more than her own life. And that's why you can

> understand why a mother like this could never forget her other daughters. She knew they were alive, and before she died she wanted to find her daughters in China. (39)

June's position at the east side of the mahjong table indicates the commencement of her voyage from West to East and her attempt to meld the identities of both mother and sister.

As a sister and as a maternal representative, June's reunion with her half-sisters enunciates the recuperation of maternal loss. In the text, the maternal death opens up the space for the daughter's restoration of a lost maternal image. As June voyages to her mother's homeland, she materialises her quest to uncover the realities of her mother's life events. She carries along with her, the dreams of her mother, to 'their' home land for the first time in her life, albeit she has visited the land innumerable times through Suyuan's depictions. As June shares the space with her half-sisters, she experiences "mutual empathy" which creates a sense of self as connected to the other (Friedman 332).

The continuity of the female line restored through the sisters' mutual identification with each other reaffirms matrilineage as the possibility of a nurturing sisterhood and the melding of cross-cultural linkages. China as the motherland becomes the site of feminine bonding for June and her twin sisters. The Chinese territory functions as a "prephallic" and "pre-oedipal space" where matriarchal bonds and ties to the motherland intersect (Picarazzi

110). As they stand together, June comprehends the culmination of her ethnic identity: "Together we look like our mother. Her same eyes, her same mouth, open in surprise to see, at last, her long-cherished wish" (*JLC* 288). The three sisters sense the spiritual presence of their mother which provides them a "reassurance" and "a pleasurable connection" (Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love* 31).

June's incapacity to decipher her mother's Kweilin story demonstrates the multiple endings of the same story and its defective translation. Suyuan sets in her personal life story at Kweilin with multiple versions of maternal loss conditioned by war and patriarchy. Her Kweilin story typifies her diverse emotional perspectives that recoup the painful and inerasable trauma of her life. The dilemma faced by Suyuan needs to be reassessed as it includes the most personal and traumatic moment that projects her long-held anxiety and guilt. It is only later in life that June decodes her mother's sense of remorse and silence at her confession: "Your father is not my first husband. You are not those babies" (*JLC* 26). Suyuan transcends the geographical spaces and manages to bring in a radical revision thereby hinting at the evolution of a signified self.

When the four daughters, June, Waverly, Rose and Lena fail to confirm to their mothers' expectations, they resort to physical isolation, emotional detachment and psychological humiliation. They struggle for a psychological subtlety and emotional stability as they attempt to gain a degree of autonomy

from their mothers. The daughters in the novel strive to manage feelings of insufficiency and rejection in the face of incongruous maternal expressions and conditional affection. The constant failures in life allow June to practice a form of 'revengeful narcissism' which makes her a rebel of her mother's strategies. As a response to her grief and intolerance, June unravels the complexities of her relationship with her mother thus: "And then I decided. I didn't have to do what my mother said any more. I wasn't her slave. This wasn't China. I had listened to her before and look what happened. She was the stupid one" (141). Her filial aggression and hatred refers to a simultaneous process of transformation from a submissive self to an independent emphatic person.

Waverly, Rose and Lena engage themselves in interracial romance to surpass their mothers and thus endorse their position within the mainstream American culture. Their marriage with Euro-American men confirms to the theory of hypergamy that enable women to enjoy privileged positions by marrying men of higher economic and social status. They consider the interracial marriage as symbolic of the assimilation and recognition of a racial minority group. They also consider it as a means to escape from the Chinese men, who in Euro-American perspective are inert, effeminate and vulnerable. The three daughters wish to blend into the dominant culture and erase the racial differences through their bonding with the White men. However, Rose's marriage with Ted is not exempted from the bondages of racial issues. Ted's

racist mother's comment that Vietnamese is least popular misidentifying Rose as Vietnamese, Ted's dominance in making all the vital decisions and the final fissure in their marriage echo the hidden racial anxieties. Lena's relationship with the American Harold based on a sense of her inefficiency becomes the potent indicator of her personal and communal estrangement:

> I… dredged up my deepest fears: that he would tell me I smelled bad, that I had terrible bathroom habits, that my taste in music and television was appalling. I worried that Harold would… look me up and down, and say, "Why, gosh, you aren't the girl I thought you were, are you? (156)

Lena's unsuccessful relationship with Harold parallels to her mother's own elimination of a sadomasochistic relationship in China. Ying-Ying's arranged marriage and its dreadful consequences make her emotionally unstable and self-alienated. The harsh adulteries of her husband lead to the termination of her pregnancy. The act of abortion and her denunciation of motherhood symbolize feminine resistance and self-objectification and "a radical denial of woman's instrumental position in a patriarchal discourse" (Lu 98). Even after her 'border crossing' and subsequent second marriage to the Anglo-American, Clifford St. Clair, she experiences 'self-erasure' through the frequent appropriation of her story and her identity. For Waverly, relationship with her Caucasian partner Rich affords her some degree of security and assurance. She considers the alliance as a kind of inner drive towards the acceptance of the

western norms. When compared to the other white men, Harold and Ted, Rich stands as a negotiator who indicates the positivity of America.

The Joy Luck Club sketches the vocalisation of maternal nostalgia as a remembrance of the survival of traumatic experiences. The mothers in the text consider the traumatic memories in China as shaping forces of identity that maintain and restore their personal identity in America. As a means of coping with the on-going pain of diaspora and the affirming survival of displacement, the past matrilineal memories in the novel collapse time and repair the emotional architecture of home. Punctuating her own personal experiences of maternal loss, An-Mei illustrates the significance of profound rupture and abandonment she experienced as a daughter. An-Mei experiences a strange connection to her mother during the maternal-filial encounter after years of separation: "[My Mother] looked up. And when she did, I saw my own face looking back at me" (*JLC* 45). An-mei's mother's prolonged absence from An-Mei's life indicates her extreme suffering as a concubine and her mother's existence as a ghost with no definite identity and individuality. As a filial devotion, An-Mei's mother cuts her flesh for her sick mother. She comments:

> This is how a daughter honours her mother. It is *shou* so deep it is in your bones. The pain of the flesh is nothing. The pain you must forget. Because sometimes that is the only way to remember what is in your bones. You must peel off your skin, and that of your mother, and her mother before her. (48)

The intentional self-inflected knife-cut wound of An-Mei's mother suggests the continuance of the matrilineal connection and epitomizes strong corporeal mother-daughter bonds. While An-Mei's mother commits suicide for the sake of her daughter, An-Mei's sacrifice of her mother's gift, the watery sapphire ring signifies her sense of devotion to her son, Bing. Lindo's early marriage and shift to her husband Tyan-yu's family reflects her sense of filial piety and love. Enduring multiple months of domestic violence, unconscious obedience, compliance and despair, Lindo struggles hard to defend her 'self' even as she negotiates her duties to others. Manipulating the Chinese fear of ghosts, Lindo escapes from Peking to America where she discards her past memories. The next mother Ying-Ying, socialized into the feminine virtues of placidness, apathy and compliance by her mother and amah, learns the quality of self-negation within the boundaries of patriarchal China. Ying-Ying's life as the bride of an unworthy man who associates sexual intercourse with *kaigwa* (open the watermelon) damages and neutralizes her sensuality.

Despite the physical and emotional trauma, the mothers in *The Joy Luck Club* retain a deep emotional attachment to their homeland, language, culture, family and friends. The articulation of maternal narratives about their traumatic experiences to their daughters becomes a "cumulative process of mutual reinforcement" (Enns and Mosher 169). The mothers desire to transmit the mother-daughter legacies in China to their daughters in the United States. As the mothers in the text share their relationship with their mothers in China to

their daughters, they desire for an optimal development of connection and mutuality with their daughters. They want to safeguard their daughters from the despotic conditions that they and their foremothers underwent in China.

Suyuan's life in Kweilin as the wife of a Koumintang officer and her escape from the war ravaged China abandoning her twin daughters demonstrate the broken family bonds. Her gradual narration of her Kweilin story to June signifies a re-evaluation of her self-punishing silence and her inherent desire to alter the daughter's perspectives. As Suyuan engages in the process of "talk back" (Hezford and Kozol 124) of her past memories to June, she announces her sense of maternal ambivalence and creates space for theorizing her disillusionment: "Your father is not my first husband. You are not those babies" (*JLC* 26). June recognizes the translucent connection of her identity and consciousness with the generational memory which "introduces the contiguity of lives taking place at various times" (Bakthin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* 62). As June realizes the significance of her mother's story, she authorizes the linkage of her maternal past with her own history as a Chinese American Woman.

An-Mei encounters a radical and arbitrary severity in the breakage and repositioning of relationships that includes her parents and siblings. As she shifts to the new family of Wu Tsing with her mother, An-Mei discovers the maternal subjection within the limits of a patriarchal household. The recognition of Syuadi as her brother and the incommunicable anguishes

encountered by her mother as the fourth wife refurbishes An-Mei both as a daughter and as a female. The maternal loss empowers and fortifies An-Mei who realizes the fundamental truth in her mother's misery and her martyrdom. Lindo as a victim of a compulsive marriage transmutes the experiences of maternal separation and external oppression into testimonials of invisible mother-daughter bonding. Later, in America, Lindo's declaration of her intuitive bonding with her mother is challenged by her newly realized actualities:

> I was so much like my mother. This was before our circumstances separated us…. She did not see how my face changed over the years. How my mouth began to droop. How I began to worry but still did not loss my hair. How my eyes began to follow the American way (JLC 257).

As she recognizes her physical and spiritual changes, she thus admits the loss of symbiosis in the bonding with her mother.

Ying-Ying romanticizes the bonding with her mother through the explication of the myth of the Moon Lady. The mythical Moon Lady, Chang-o, who is doomed "to stay on the moon, forever seeking her own selfish wishes" resonates the dependence of women upon resilient ancestral and collective systems (81). Her harrowing childhood experience heralds the ambivalence of her identity which she experiences in the later stages of her life in America. The experience of a temporary separation from the family at the age of four

in the Tai lake unsettles her identity and individuality. As Ying-Ying discovers the Moon lady as an impersonator with "shrunken cheeks, a broad oily nose, large glaring teeth, and red stained eyes" she confronts the severe certainties that mar her life as a sophisticated person in a masochistic society (82).

The Joy Luck Club showcases the exotic imagery of food that symbolize elusive virtues and points of continuity that highlight the harmonies between mothers and daughters. In the text, Tan displays festive dinners as exquisite cues that bring in familial harmony. The novel commences with an elaborate dinner after Suyuan's death and it also marks the entry of June into the maternal club as her mother's replacement. The Chinese cuisine functions as a cultural anchor that shores up a sense of Chinese culture and tradition which represents the varied aspects of the Chinese past, present and future. The text projects the significance of communal dining accompanied by talk stories and verbal conflict amid the mothers and daughters.

The mothers in the text interlace their past memories accorded with multiple Chinese dishes. Their preparation is elaborated as an artistic performance which provides both aesthetic and gastronomic pleasure. As Lindo communicates her childhood marriage to Waverly, she shares the menu of the exquisite dishes -- fresh young chicken soup for her husband, special eight-ingredient tonic soup called *tounau* for her mother-in-law -- that she prepares in her husband's household for the health of her husband and other family members. Ying-Ying lists down the sumptuous menu prepared during the Moon

festival celebration: "… the sticky rice wrapped in lotus leaves, some filled with roasted ham, some with sweet lotus seeds… a cotton sack of apples, pomegranates, and pears; sweaty carthen jars of preserved meats and vegetables…" (73). For An-Mei, food is a painful reminder of her matrilineal memory of her mother and her grandmother, Popo. The terrible wound on her neck by the spillage of steaming soup suggests the trauma that replicates in her life. The special restorative soup prepared with herbs, medicines and flesh announces An-Mei's mother's attempt to honour matriarchy. For the joy luck mothers, food becomes a kind of "linguistic code" -- a kind of a social language that reflects the inherent beliefs within the maternal culture and "a potentially fruitful area of inquiry into the Chinese social system" (Scott 191).

The linkage of Chinese cuisine to the Chinese dietetic tradition allows the daughters to reflect on the cultural discrepancies amid China and America. Rich's inappropriate conduct at the dining with the Chinese family enables Waverly to distinguish the polarities in Chinese and American etiquette. Similar to Rich, Waverly's little daughter, Shoshana also discloses her unawareness of Chinese culture and polite manner at the dining table. The Chinese dishes suggest multi-ethnic perplexity which announces the ambiguity as experienced by the half-Chinese daughters in the land of America. June explains her bafflement at the Chinese concepts through the citation of a Chinese expression: "She said the two soups were almost the same, *chabudwo*. Or maybe she said *butong*, not the same thing at all. It was one of

those Chinese expressions that means the better half of mixed intensions. I can never remember things I didn't understand in the first place" (*JLC* 19). For young Lena, food, as a symbol of future, gets imbued with supernatural power that has the power to bring both luck and evil. The paranormal power of food facilitates Lena to interpret her mother's stories in a distinct manner that she develops eating disorder and later anorexia.

The Joy Luck Club announces the implication of dreams in the lives of the mothers and daughters. As a connection between human conscious and unconscious, the dreams in the text form a transparent bridge between China and America. As entryways to 'self,' dreams echo intensely buried uncertainties and personal fears of the daughters in the text. June continually dreams of crossing the boundary to meet her half-sisters in Shanghai. For Lindo, dream becomes a 'linguistic entity' that liberates her 'self' from patriarchal hold. Lindo escapes the wedlock through the verbal translation of her terrifying dream about her husband to her in-laws who allow Lindo to walk out from the wedlock and move to America. Rose recurrently dreams of Old Mr. Chou, a malicious custodian of the dream world, who disturbs her sleep and frightens her all through her childhood. The patterns of dreams of mothers and daughters in the novel convey psychic reverberations that spew out negative thoughts and emotional vibrations.

The Joy Luck Club establishes the significance of peculiar Chinese and American clothing that helps the first-generation immigrants to perform

cultural bewilderment, feigned identity and employ subterfuge to locate themselves within America. The specific dress code helps the women in the text to display their cultural disintegration in America where they attempt to negotiate their ethnic selves through clothing. When Suyuan moves to America, she transports a trunk full of fancy Chinese dresses inappropriate for her American life. In America, the indispensable acceptance of lengthy unfit American clothes indicates her emotional bafflement and cultural puzzlement in her unexpected dislocation from China to America. In one of the early photographs of Ying-Ying after immigration, she merges traditional ankle-length Chinese outfit with a western jacket with lengthened shoulders, wide collars and huge buttons. The East-West costume clash proclaims Ying-Ying's emotional turmoil at her altered birth date and loss of Chinese name. An-Mei shifts from Chinese dresses to American garbs on account of her shift from her paternal house to Tientsin to live along with her mother. An-Mei later realizes the hidden economic reasons for her and her mother's western clothing. When the western clothes provide An-Mei and her mother fake identities, it also promises economic security to them in the Tientsin household. As the western attires enable the mothers to adapt themselves to the new American life, it also allows them to confirm the fact that selectivity is a personal choice.

In *The Joy Luck Club*, the maternal ambivalence in articulating the stories of their disillusionments to daughters' announce the emotional

embarrassment and guilt they endure as mothers and as women. Suyuan, An-Mei, Lindo and Ying-Ying, as 'naturalized' immigrants, are perceived as 'others' in the American mainstream society. The lack of English fluency and inter-ethnic literacy relegate the ethnic mothers in the novel to a peripheral position devoid of subject and power. The maternal experiences in the novel are typical first-hand instances of first generation immigrants who travel to America hoping for better life conditions. For them, America becomes "a promised land of greater economic and social opportunity as well as greater freedom and justice" (Chu 143). The societal norms of China approve the physical and emotional abuse of women, where women double cross or deceive themselves and other women to outlive and obtain repute in the society. An-Mei's mother's life is damaged by a woman who indirectly mediates to separate An-Mei from her mother. The maternal family of An-Mei is responsible for branding An-Mei's mother as a ghost. The maternal stories in the text authenticates "the acquisition of an effective literary voice, the oppression of women within their own ethnic group as well as within the dominant patriarchal racist culture, the control of feminine sexuality" and "the traditional contexts of their racial identity" (Madsen 229). Suyuan's futile attempts to recover her lost twin daughters whom she abandoned in war-torn China indicate her struggle to recuperate her lost self and subjectivity. An-Mei struggles to discover her mother and decode her painful past which she describes as a hurting wound. All through her life, Ying-Ying ventures to

recoup her youthful days of vitality and vigour: “The same innocence, trust and restlessness, the wonder, fear and loneliness. How I lost myself…. I wish to be found” (JLC 83). All the four mothers in *The Joy Luck Club* spend “most of their energy to [nurture] independence and struggle to “inculcate the social and moral values that make up the content of the [daughters’] superego” (Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love* 152). The daughters in the text experience “empathic failure” which refers to the parental or maternal failure to respond appropriate to the child’s emotional needs” (Campbell 332).

Uninformed of the psychosocial and chronological roots of the maternal tragedy, the daughters in the text fail to appreciate their mothers. June, Waverly, Rose and Lena tag their mothers as illogical and irrational Chinese women with negligible sense of individuality. The novel displays subtle forms of psychological damage inflicted by daughters on their dictatorial mothers to dominate and silent them. In a fit of rage, June utters the deplorable and shocking statement that silences and shatters Suyuan completely: ““Then I wish I wasn’t your daughter. I wish you weren’t my mother,” I shouted…. “Then I wish I’d never be born!” I shouted. “I wish I were dead! Like them”” (*JLC* 142). June crosses the restricted boundary of her mother’s life and utilizes past memory as a strong weapon to subjugate and silence her mother.

The authoritative stance of Lindo and the inability of Waverly to separate herself from her mother create ripples of aggression that stands as a hindrance to mutual recognition. In moments of distress, Waverly voices her frustrations

against her bossy mother: “I wish you wouldn’t do that, telling everybody I’m your daughter” (99). As Waverly tries to distance herself from Lindo, she indirectly attempts to “grow out of relationships rather than becoming more active and sovereign within them” and “start in a dual oneness and wind up in a state of singular oneness” (Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love* 17). Rose’s horrifying dream of Old Mr. Chou for selecting the doll against An-Mei’s choice indicates her dilemma in splitting her ‘self’ from her mother. Lena’s inability to decode her maternal silence and heal maternal depression announces the estrangement and cultural alienation between the two women. Lena discloses her failure to verbalize her mother’s long silence over years: “And my eyes, my mother gave me my eyes, no eyelids, as if they were carved on a jack-o’-lantern with two swift cuts of a short knife” (*JLC* 104).

In *The Joy Luck Club*, the daughters long to acclimatize impalpably into Americanness. Their cravings to categorise their mothers as outsiders and their desire to get engulfed into the American mainstream culture lessen the slightest chance to comprehend the maternal culture and the ancestral land. The prejudiced notions about their mothers and mother land shut their entrée to the more convoluted and resonant histories about China and Chinese women. When June becomes a copy writer in a small advertising agency despite her maternal wishes of turning her into a successful prodigy like Shirley Temple, she reveals her inability to internalize and relate to the inner voice of her mother. In a moment of exasperation, June shouts at her mother

which marks the beginning of their conflict: “You want me to be someone that I am not! I’ll never be the kind of daughter you want me to be” (142). As June denounces her mother, she attempts to reconfigure and erase the substantial traces of her Chineseness which she considers as a threat to her American identity.

Waverly’s association with Lindo assumes the simulacrum of a chess game in which Lindo becomes the powerful opponent. She comments, “In my head, I saw a chess board with sixty-four black and white squares. Opposite me was my opponent, two angry black slits. She wore a triumphant smile” (100). Lindo’s pride in Waverly’s talent in Chess and Waverly’s humiliation at her mother’s brags project the conflicts in their temperament. Lindo ascribes her tussles with her daughter to the prospects and sacrifices necessitated by the American culture. When Lindo succeeds in maintaining the double identity of Chinese and American to survive within America, Waverly fails to acquire the best combination of Chinese character and American circumstances. From a restricted conventional notion of individuality and self-support, Waverly falls short to define the constructive forms of dependency with her mother.

Lena’s relationship with her Caucasian partner, Harold verifies the agonizing marker of her personal and communal estrangement. Defining her mother, Ying-Ying as a “displaced person... lost in a sea of immigration categories” who speaks little English and more Mandarin, Lena propounds the spiritual and cultural alienation between them (104). When Lena points out,

"my mother gave me my eyes, no eyelids…. I used to push my eyes in on the sides to make them rounder. Or I'd open them very wide until I could see the white parts," she pinpoints her complexities in appreciating her mother's ethnicity and objectifies her clichéd, conventional and racialist views of the Chinese (104). As Lena inherits the unspoken terrors of her mother, she fails to internalise the qualities of her mother. Erasure of her Chinese name (Gu Ying-Ying) and adoption of the American name (Betty St. Clair) induce Ying-Ying into a state of uncertainty to deal with her seclusion and isolation. By recording the wrong birth date in immigration documents, Lena's father, "... with the sweep of a pen" alters Ying-Ying's real name and she becomes "a dragon instead of a tiger" according to the Chinese lunar calendar (104). Unable to decode her mother's fictive self, Lena fails to identify the tiger spirit within her mother. Lena associates the paranoid and depressive fantasies of Ying-Ying to a state of insanity which promotes a psychic detention in the early stages of their mother-daughter bonding. Rose's shortage of a specific belief system within her affects her emotional equilibrium. Rose fails to outline and organize her ideas of causality and individuality in contrast to her mother, An-Mei. Her passivity and lack of choice unsettles her life with her husband Ted. The four daughters with hyphenated culture subsist in the transitional spaces between the landscapes of China and America. They engage in self-investigation, identification and appreciation of maternal culture so as to achieve psychological balance.

Amy Tan formulates the literal, figurative and allegorical description of walls throughout *The Joy Luck Club*. As barriers between Chinese and American cultures, between Chinese mothers and American daughters, walls prevent maternal-filial communication to a great extent. The wall disrupts the optimal mother-daughter communication in the text when Lena associates walls to a premonition of impending danger and Ying-Ying fails to resolve Lena's hidden fears about walls. Lena fantasizes to save her depressed mother from the state of psychosis through a confessional communication with her mother: "And the daughter said, "Now you must come back, to the other side. Then you can see why you were wrong." And the girl grabbed her mother's hand and pulled her through the wall" (115). The closeted maternal lives within the metaphorical and literal walls create conceptual boundaries and concrete barriers amid mothers and daughters in the text.

The Joy Luck Club reiterates wind as the metaphor of feminine power which allows the mothers to use wind to their advantage. Lindo refers to the directions of wind to explain the strategies in winning the chess game to her daughter, Waverly. In her opinion, wind, as a source of invisible power, allows Waverly to defeat her chess opponents: "You don't have to be smart to win chess. It is just tricks. You blow from North, South, East and West. The other person becomes confused. They don't know which way to run" (187). Waverly also associates wind to delineate her mother's tactics in influencing Waverly's persona. Lindo's wind power allows her to surpass Waverly and pushes her

away: “I felt myself growing light. I rose up into the air and flew out the window. Higher and higher, above the alley, over the tops of tiled roofs, where I was gathered up by the wind and pushed up toward the night sky” (101). The wind acts as a monitoring metaphor in the life of Ying-Ying who censures the north wind for her marital issues. She considers the strongest wind as responsible to her husband’s extramarital affairs: “What I did not know is that the north wind is the coldest. It penetrates the heart and takes the warmth away. The wind gathered such a force that it blew my husband past my bedroom and out the back door” (247). Ying-Ying associates the wrong direction of wind as the consequence of Lena’s imbalance and her doomed married life with Harold. June equates Suyuan’s strength with the powerful winds from four directions that makes her a constant winner in the mah-jong game. As a symbol of Chinese identity, wind exposes the temperament of mothers and daughters in the text.

In *The Joy Luck Club*, the bicultural daughters struggle to escape from their mothers’ paralysing hold only to sense their transparent connection with the umbilical cord. The severe psychological tension to conform to the American ideals while retaining and preserving ethnic consciousness lands them in a state of duality. The absence of a reasonable hiatus to discriminate the dichotomies of their dual identities results in evolving a borderland identity to the daughters. In the chapter titled, “A Pair of Two Tickets,” as June literally “world travels” to her mother’s homeland, she carries along with

her the intensions and dreams of her mother albeit she has metaphorically visited the land innumerable times through maternal depictions (Yancy 59). June materializes her quest to uncover the realities of her mother's life events. While June writes her mother's past in perfect English, she renders her mother her once lost subjectivity and attempts to revive and recover the lost history. The orient language, English functions in the novel as a powerful agent to reaffirm the ethnicity and distinctness of the ethnic minority. The borderline stands as a transition point which becomes the alleyway to her legacies. June discerns the true spirit of her identity as she literally and symbolically travels to her mother's world:

> The minute our train leaves the Hong Kong border and enters Shenzhen, China, I feel different. I can feel the skin on my forehead tingling, my blood rushing through a new course, my bones aching with a familiar old pain. And I think, My mother was right. I am becoming Chinese. (*JLC* 267)

June experiences an entirely different China dissimilar to the one introduced to her by her mother. She stands mystified in the contemporary, classy international city, a pecuniary and ethnic centre of China. June's quest in the delineation of her Chinese identity becomes "a precarious and ambiguous, transnational, diasporic legacy and project" that remains perpetually conveyed and structured "in multiple, fluid, and intersecting frames of reference in and between China and United States" (Ho 187). June realizes that the "boundary

is not that at which something stops but… from which something begins its presencing" (Bhabha 1). June effectively resurrects, reconstructs and reclaims maternal cultural practices. As June shares the Polaroid space with her half-sisters, Chwun Yu and Chwun Hwa, she experiences "the gratification of being in attunement with them" (Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love* 27). The three sisters sense the presence of their mother which provides them "reassurance" and "a pleasurable connection" (31).

As Waverly re-examines her relationship with Lindo, she realizes that her mother "is not only an object of love but also a mainstay of [her] identity" (79). In Lindo, Waverly finds "an old woman, a wok for her armor, a knitting needle for her sword, getting a little crabby as she waited patiently for her daughter to invite her in" (*JLC* 183-184). When Lindo, Waverly and Rich travel to China, they participate in a limitless possibility which "evokes a particular kind of holding, a feeling of safety without confinement" (Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love* 127). Waverly experiences compatible emotional inclination towards Lindo which allows her to authenticate her mother's position by "imaginatively perceiving the [m]other's needs and feelings" (170). The disturbed experience with the psychiatrist and the submissive life with Ted allow Rose to re-examine her emotional disposition. The life experiences teach Rose the significance of the maternal advice:

> "A girl is like a young tree," she said. "You must stand tall and listen to your mother standing next to you. That is the only way to

> grow strong and straight…." It was only later that I discovered there was a serious flaw with the American version. There were too many choices, so it was easy to get confused and pick the wrong thing. (*JLC* 191)

She amasses the courage to claim her divorce rights from Ted through her imaginative identification with her mother. She rediscovers her identity as neither Chinese, nor American, but Chinese American. Rose creates a new intersubjective space which provides her emotional space to re-evaluate her intentional horizons and allows her to engage in productive interactions with her mother evading the polarizing paradigms of authority and passivity.

As Lena acknowledges her mother's past, she learns to transgress her own existential limits through the maternal history. Lena "make[s] use of the space in-between that is created by shared feeling and discovery" and both Ying-Ying and Lena execute "the dance of mutual recognition" (Benjamin, *The Bond's of Love* 130) that offers them the experience of being and playing alone in the unobtrusive but reassuring presence of the other" (126).

In the textual space of *The Joy Luck Club*, the daughters' shift from resistance to acquiescence signifies the evolution of their mature selves and the ethnicization of maternal experiences. Their reconnection to the matrilineal history allows them to repair their fragmented identities. As the daughters attest the maternal significance in their lives, they negotiate a sense of feminist spirit of mutuality that unravels the intricate web of individual

history and powerful emotion inherent in mother-daughter relationship. They develop the perspective of a mutual realm of intersubjectivity that enables them to nurture independence. The emotional unison with mothers bestows spiritual sustenance, credibility, confidence, self-assurance and invigorated sense of worth for daughters.

Amy Tan's mothers parade 'cultural pluralism' within the confines of the larger mainstream society while preserving their unique cultural legacies. The daughters shift their position from the 'melting pot' to the 'salad bowl'. The melting pot, as the name suggests, signifies the process of melting together into a common culture and the theory in which the distinctive cultural groups exist on their own terms. The novel traces the journey undertaken by the daughters from their melting pot statuses to their cultural roots. The daughters redefine their position and they arrive at a new juncture that marks their entry to the salad bowl in which the cultural groups exist separately and maintain their practices and institutions.

In *The Joy Luck Club* the women grasp the essence of mutuality which epitomizes the unique way of "'being- in- relationship' where [mothers and daughters] can be authentically present" that permits them to "freely represent their feelings, thoughts and perceptions in the relationship with movement towards greater spaciousness" (Mens-Verhulst et al. 115). In the textual space, Amy Tan takes a positive stance when she makes her characters retain their cultural identity while encompassing the enviable aspects of the host country's

culture. Even the first generation mothers realize the prospects of the mainstream culture and they start assimilating without sieving the essence of their ethnicity. Lindo's China trip and her inability to be a typical Chinese woman, even with a Chinese tongue and local money, echoes her assimilated self.

In *The Joy Luck Club*, Amy Tan concentrates on developing distinctive feminine ethnic and racial voices through her characterization of these four mother-daughter pairs. Tan excels in reworking the ethnic cultural tradition which enables the evolution of resilient female voices while melding the traditional patriarchal values. Tan combines the voices of mothers and daughters in a sequential manner. The dual voice of the mothers and daughters diffuses the ancestral heritage, racial identity and cultural traditions as they share the personal, subjective experiences and losses of their borderland existence. The incorporation of the multiple voices synthesizes the plurality of consciousness which echoes the idea of Bakhtin's "polyphony". The text projects the maternal-filial voices as "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousness" which culminates into "polyphony of fully valid voices" (Bhaktin, *Problems of Destoevsky's Poetics* 6). The multiplicity of voices enhances the subjectivity of the eight female protagonists who manage to outlive their catastrophes and emerge as distinct individuals.

Chapter III

Aura of Mythopoeic Shift: *The Kitchen God's Wife*

The Kitchen God's Wife (1991) traces the trajectory of a metaphorical journey through family storytelling and the subsequent identity construction of women. The novel projects the potential of oral storytelling to bridge intergenerational cracks and nurture close relational bonds between mothers and daughters. Storytelling, in the narrative, operates as a voiced act of interface based on the personal experience of the mother protagonist. It surfaces as a vital mode of discourse that precipitates how the act of telling and listening to life stories outline and revamp the chronicles. Maternal story maps out "ideal itineraries" (Jackson 25) and indicates how both mother and daughter "cross, breach and blur" the boundaries of ethnicity (30). The text registers Amy Tan's efforts to justify the capacity of interpersonal narratives to settle the socio-cultural misunderstandings amid the mother-daughter dyad. The text challenges the traditional silencing of women by privileging the maternal voice and depicting the complex mother-daughter relationship from the mother's perspective. The textual space conceives the act of storytelling as an arena for resolute reconstruction of traumatic past that creates a resonance between a life story and the communal and ethnic context of the story.

In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Tan's depiction of storytelling unveils the substantial potentialities of 'orality' as a maternal tradition. The text re-

evaluates the significance of oral history and storytelling that permits the mother to articulate her experiences and empowers her in intergenerational dissemination of past memories. The text highlights problems of identification with and differentiation from the mother accentuating the need for an empathetic relationship between mothers and daughters as a vital step towards self-actualization. The interpersonal participation during the process of storytelling allows both mother and daughter to be social interlocutors and performers. The novel punctuates, during the progression of the story, the confidential and symbiotic act of identity construction by both daughter and mother.

The Kitchen God's Wife can be labelled under the title of "autobiografiction" as Tan enmeshes fictional and factual elements in a realistic manner (Saunders 150). According to Max Saunders, autobiografiction expresses "the inner life, but in a form fictionalized enough to maintain its privacy; and it can also present the self as external to itself -- as other -- so as to permit a revelation of the self's obscure desires to itself" (150).

The Kitchen God's Wife, divided into 26 chapters, can roughly be split into three sections separated by blank pages. Positioned at 1990 San Francisco, Tan opens the novel with a weird amalgamation of a betrothal and a funeral that announces the disagreements that lurk behind the characters especially mother Winnie and daughter Pearl. Part one that includes chapters 1, 2, 3and 4 set in San Francisco and San Jose, details the present life of

Winnie and Pearl. The first two chapters titled “The Shop of the Gods” and “Auntie Du’s Funeral,” narrated by Pearl introduce the two families, Kwongs (Hulan/ Helen Kwong, Kuang An/ Henry Kwong, Roger Kwong, Mary Kwong Chu and Frank Kwong) and Louies (James Y. Louie/ Jimmy, Winnie Louie, Pearl Louie Brandt and Samuel Louie), their individual concerns, fears and hopes. The next two chapters titled “When the Fishes are Three Days Old” and “Long, Long Distance,” narrated by Winnie recount her past life, her family and her relationship with her best friend, Helen Kwong. These four chapters are significant as they announce the unsettled relationship between the mother and the daughter.

Part two, the core of the novel, from Chapters 5 to 24, teases out Winnie’s tedious journey from the outskirts of China to the busy streets of San Francisco. She crosses through several time periods both in pre-war and post-war China and in America after traversing various life stages as a daughter, foster child, cousin, friend, fiancé, wife, divorcee, mother and a widower. The section which opens with the chapter titled “Ten Thousand Things” describes Winnie’s (Jiang Weili/Wei wei) childhood life as the daughter of a famous Shanghai textile factory owner, Jiang Sao-Yen. Abandoned by her mother and subsequent desertion by father at the prime age of six puts Winnie under the care of her father’s brother in Tsungming Island. The chapter details young Winnie’s contemplation of her strong mother who refuses to be the ‘Double Second’ wife of her father. The next few chapters

describe Winnie's life in the foster family with Old Aunt, New Aunt and her cousins, Peanut (Jiang Huazheng), Little Gong and Little Gao. Chapter 9, "Best Time of the Year" depicts Winnie's early marriage to the Chinese Air Force Pilot, Wen Fu and her meeting with Wen Fu's boss Jiaguo's bossy wife Helen (Hulan). The rest few chapters illustrate Winnie's long and stormy friendship with Helen, her enduring struggles to cope with the abusive husband Wen Fu, her personal and collective struggles to survive the Chinese annexation by Japanese. The consequent chapters 14 and 15, titled "Bad Eye" and "A Flea on a Tiger's Head" are vital as they mention the birth and death of Winnie's two daughters, Mochou (Sorrowfree) and Yiku (Pleasure over bitterness) and the birth of a son, Danru. The following chapters discuss Winnie's encounter with the Chinese American, James Y. Louie (Jimmy), death of her son, Danru, her arrest, trial, imprisonment, release and further rape by Wen Fu and her final escape from Wen Fu and China to join hands with Jimmy in America. The final chapter, "Favor," of this section announces the hidden terrible secret regarding the parentage of Pearl.

Part 3, the short concluding section of the narrative, consists of two chapters that describe the settlement of the mother-daughter conflict as they share long held secrets. Pearl discloses her multiple sclerosis to Winnie who decides to go on a trip to China to seek herbal treatments for Pearl. The final chapter displays Winnie gifting Pearl a new goddess, Lady Sorrowfree, in order to be placed in the red temple altar.

The fictional fabric of *The Kitchen God's Wife* interweaves autobiographical elements from Tan's life. Tan sets mother Winnie's (modelled after Tan's mother, Daisy Tan) confessional narrative in an autobiographical mode by detailing her phases of life such as Infancy, Childhood, Adolescence, Maturity and Middle Age in the core 25 chapters. In her memoir, *The Opposite of Fate*, Amy Tan communicates the semiautobiographical strains in the novel thus:

> So, indeed, some of the events in *The Kitchen God's Wife* are based on my mother's life: her marriage to "that bad man," the death of her children, her fortuitous encounter with my father…. It is my mother's story in the most important of the ways to me: her passion, her will, her hope, the innocence she never lost. (Tan 211)

The Kitchen God's Wife discusses two generations of mother-daughter pairs, 'Winnie's unnamed mother and Winnie' and 'Winnie and Pearl.' The first Chinese mother-daughter pair experiences social ostracism and oppression under the closed structures of patriarchy. The second mother-daughter pair suffers from psychological distance owing to their cultural and linguistic contrasts. The central issue of the novel is the emotional aloofness of Winnie and Pearl which is highlighted by Tan through the shifts in point of view between the two women. Tan recounts the story through the alternating first-person accounts of this mother-daughter pairing and exploits the stratagem of flashback to interconnect the storylines. Tan begins and ends the novel in

daughter Pearl's point of view as it anchors and intensifies the emotional impact of the mother Winnie's story. In the first two chapters, Pearl presents the present-day situations including concerns about her chronic neural illness, Multiple Sclerosis, in the present tense to give exigency and imminence to the commencement of the narrative. She resumes her first-person account in Chapter 25 after Winnie completes her life story. In this novel, Tan limits the daughterly voice to the first and last section in order to accentuate the maternal voice which covers almost three-fourth of the entire novel.

The lengthy middle section is written in the form of a confessional narrative by Winnie that discusses her past life in China described through flashbacks, with intermittent digressions and editorial remarks by the narrator. Winnie's confession implies that she is not only resilient to gain Pearl's indulgence and tolerance but also efficient to put her life into perspective from the vantage point of her age. Her confession is set within the scaffold of everyday events and trepidations, narrated in first-person by Winnie. The first-person outpourings of the confessional narrator are directed towards the daughter, Pearl. Chapters 3 and 4 are in Winnie's first-person singular voice in past tense that leads to her lengthy confession that follows in the next section. Winnie takes over the last chapter in same voice and tense except the final concluding words to Pearl in the present tense. The shift in Pearl's point of view at the end of the novel, after listening to Winnie's narrative suggest her altered visions about her mother and maternal land.

The Kitchen God's Wife evinces the tradition of 'ethnographic feminism' by employing a refashioned Chinese myth as the underpinning narrative that configures the tale of an émigré mother and her second generation daughter. Tan's fictional space reconfigures the ethnographic myth of the Kitchen God by feminizing a folk belief that otherwise favours Chinese patriarchy. The strategy of mythopoeic revision allows Tan's feminist protagonist to destabilize and debunk the notion of a specific authoritative gendered version of the folk tale based on Confucian paradigms. Tan incorporates the mother-story as allied with the revised version of the Kitchen God myth by drawing in a comparison between Winnie and the female Goddess. In Rich's opinion, the subversion of myth is "[an] act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction -- … [It] is an act of survival… [and]… a search for identity: it is part of her refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society" (Landy 18). Winnie, the Chinese mother in the novel, demystifies her empowered stature through the feminist revisionist myth making of her culture's gender folklores by replacing a female goddess in the place of a male counterpart. Through the revisionist myth, mother Winnie educates Pearl "how to survive in interlocking structures of race, class, and gender oppression while rejecting and transcending those same structures.…" (Collins 184). Tan, thereby, attempts to make a "mythological change" (Lauter vii) which vocalizes a "female experience that is untainted by patriarchal culture" (8).

Winnie narrates the Chinese folktale to the American granddaughters, Cleo and Tessa, in the presence of her daughter, Pearl so as to liberate them from phallocentric boundaries. The oral execution of the myth transfers cultural information to the grandchildren as a definite means of ethnic education. The rendition of the revised Chinese myth in America implies Winnie's desire for the restoration of the disoriented family structure by recreating a familiar landscape that facilitates her survival in the new land. Framing her story within the structure of the revised myth allows Winnie to redefine her identity and to provide rectifications to the simulated "images of what [she has] collectively and historically suffered" (Ostriker 73).

The Kitchen God's Wife draws its title from the Chinese mythological story of the Kitchen God/ stove God Zhang and refers to his beloved wife, Guo. There are many versions to the tale of the Kitchen God. In Tan's adaptation of the myth, an affluent farmer, Zhang abandons his hardworking and adorable wife, Guo, for his illicit love towards a concubine named Lady Li. After being bullied by Lady Li, penniless Zhang happens to meet his wife who forgives him for all his misdeeds. Zhang jumps into the hearth and commits suicide out of shame. According to the myth, Jade Emperor (the ruler of heaven) makes him the Kitchen God for his timely repentance. When the faulty husband Zhang becomes the God, the ideal wife, Guo remains behind the screen anonymous and unidentified.

In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Winnie's life story is analogous with the

Chinese myth of the Kitchen God. Winnie, like beloved wife Guo, remains the meticulous and duty bound wife who spends her youthful years serving her abusive, adulterous husband, Wen Fu. Despite her humility and tolerance, Winnie lives through Wen Fu's recurrent rapes, physical torments and harassments. Winnie projects Zhang and Wen Fu as the embodiments of the patriarchal society. In the cultural context of America, Winnie amasses the courage to challenge Chinese patriarchal doctrines. Her powerful words mark her denunciation of gender biased idols and canons: "Why should I want that kind of person to judge me, a man who cheated his wife? His wife was the good one, not him" (*KGW* 55). The Chinese myth portrays the wife of the Kitchen God Zhang as a conservative, compassionate and tolerant lady who stands under her husband's authority. Winnie apprehends the need to walk out from the gendered dogmas so as to redesign her identity in China and later in America. In her later retrospections on past years, she claims to Pearl thus: "If I had to change the whole world to change my own life, I would have done that" (355-56). Winnie forsaking Wen Fu for Jimmy Louie is as an act of 'mature aggression' that offers her physical and psychological liberation. Winnie presents the ideologically constructed and historically situated myth in the form of a cultural artefact. In finding an ethical dimension to her psychological alienation from Pearl, Winnie decides to liberate herself from the shames of the past by confiding her life secrets to her daughter, Pearl. In her opinion, she is "like that wife of Kitchen God. Nobody worshipped her

either. He got all the excuses. He got all the credit. She was forgotten" (356). Winnie's demarcation from Guo is marked by her ability to restate and restore her voice.

In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Winnie utilizes the strategy of storytelling as a restorative measure to affix the fissure in her relationship with daughter Pearl. The matriarchal storytelling becomes a theoretical background for the intra-psychic relationship between Winnie and Pearl. The personal narrative in the form of a confessional Bildungsroman embellishes the hardships of China and Winnie under siege. She strives to unfetter herself from the liability of being a discarded daughter, a molested wife at the backdrop of Sino-Japanese war, a mother ceasing unwanted gestations through abortion, a captive and runaway wife, longing to convince Pearl that choices made under constraints exceed integrity both as a mother and as a woman. Winnie designs her life story in a manner that polishes her Chinese identity and her hybrid identity in America. Sharing personal experiences create concrete levels of intimacy between Winnie and Pearl which ultimately allows them to discover Chinese home space within the American landscape.

Adopting the structure of tale within a tale, *The Kitchen God's Wife* examines Winnie's act of self-construction entwined with her schemata of settling the discrepancies with her daughter Pearl. Winnie's life story includes many significant women who play vital roles in the lives of Winnie -- her biological mother, who leaves her in pursuit of her dreams; Old Aunt and San

Ma, her surrogate mothers in the foster family -- right from childhood to late adolescence. It allows the mother and daughter to disclose long held secrets which ultimately open grounds for cultivating healthy emotional relationship between the two. Here Winnie's mission is a sort of psychological 'talking cure' that substantiates her need for recognition while longing for an assimilation and equilibrium between her Chinese self and Americanized daughter.

The Kitchen God's Wife projects narration as a "human communication practice" as experienced by the mother narrator who "combines the performative "doing" of storytelling with what is "done" in the performance of a story" (Langellier and Peterson 2). Winnie's past rooted within the strategy of nonlinear and overlapping narrative passes through the dominant metaphors of loss and longing. Winnie discovers the power of orality to commemorate her past and the traumatic experience of her community. Winnie conceives storytelling as a "performative" and "(de)constructionist" act due to its therapeutic ability to redefine self (Fagundes and Blayer 139). The "performative" storytelling thus provides Winnie the "power of discourse…[that] produce[s] effects through reiteration" (Butler, *Bodies that Matter* 20). Winnie's first person omniscient narration creates a feminine voice of a Chinese woman who talks back to both the Chinese patriarchy's gendered expectation of subservience and her community's sexism and biased attitudes. As a self-referential postmodern discourse, oral telling of the story

requires the physical presence of the teller and the listener. The poignant participation of Winnie and Pearl in the same space provides the act of storytelling an interpersonal dimension.

The *Kitchen God's Wife* positions storytelling as the possible means for the transmission of Chinese historical and cultural knowledge in diaspora. Sharing traumatic past with daughter Pearl allows Winnie to decode both cultural history and personal memory. Tan privileges maternal storyteller and storytelling as vital facets of the Chinese historical and cultural discourse. In the narrative, Tan stresses the significance of writing and authorship. Winnie demonstrates her creativity through beautifully inscribed banners and wreaths in her flower shop. The short sayings in golden Chinese letters on red banners project her musings on life, death, hope and luck. Her wishes of hope and luck in Chinese calligraphy such as "Money Smells Good in Your New Restaurant Business," "First-Class Life for your First Baby," "Double-Happiness Wedding Triples Family Fortune" and "Health Returns Fast, Always Hoping" suggest her optimistic outlook on forthcoming days in America (*KGW* 23). For Winnie Louie, the Chinese script is an incarnation of her feelings and personalities from which she perceives her life experiences, tastes and individuality. Along with writing and authorship, Winnie also stresses the significance of literateness by pointing out the literacy of her mother. Tan's representation of Winnie's mother as a highly educated bilingual woman in the Chinese society where the patriarchy deems that "the girl's eyes

should never be used for reading, only for sewing" announces the radical shift in the feminine persona (109). Winnie becomes aware of the limitations of her illiteracy as she makes a trip to the city with her mother. As she moves through the market with her mother, she realizes her inability to read both Chinese and English. Later Winnie learns both the languages that enable her to write letter to Wen Fu and thus make an escape to America.

The art of sewing acquires the dimension of a motif that runs throughout the narrative as an excelling and perpetual source of hope, inspiration and survival. As a dowry item, a gift for survival and a traditional domestic chore, sewing recurs throughout the novel influencing the lives of several women characters. Winnie channels her frustration, anger and sadness into the art of sewing. Rerouting righteous rage with creative acts like knitting and sewing, Winnie learns to survive the horrible life with Wen Fu, the uncertainty of war and the tragic loss of her children, Mochou, Yiku and Danru. Through the act of sewing, Helen, Winnie and Wan Betty become participants of a feminine activity that allows them to craft their different lives and fashion their own destinies. Winnie intends to pass the cultural knowledge of sewing and embroidery to her daughter, Pearl so as to ensure the survival of maternal traditions. Sewing, in the text, takes place within an empowered feminine space that invariably connects women who are under the threshold of passing it to the next generation. Sewing also promotes sisterhood when Winnie handovers her precious black sewing machine to Wan Betty as a token of

love. Displayed as an innately matriarchal tradition, the act of sewing signifies a delicate form of female agency for the figurative power and meaning endorsed with this ritual is suspended from men.

Cleaning, a womanly symbol of spiritual cleansing is a significant motif in the novel. It helps Winnie to cleanse her past miseries and sorrows. Cleaning, in the text, becomes a constructive act that provides Winnie the courage to voice her supressed contentions. After hearing the news of Wen Fu's death from Helen, Winnie works all night cleaning the entire house as a sort of ritual to forget and wipe off all past miseries. In Chapter 6, "Peanut's Fortune," Winnie recalls cleaning as a customary practice where women thoroughly clean the house the day before the New Year. Cleaning, for Winnie, is a kind of purgation that polishes her mind and spirit:

> All night long I cleaned my house to forget. I shook my curtains, beat my sofa, dusted my tables and the rail going up my stairs. I wiped down the TV set, wiped the picture frame on top, the glass, looked at the picture underneath: Jimmy, always so young. I went into my bedroom, changed the sheets on my bed.… (81)

Cleaning also helps Winnie to have a better understanding of Pearl. Cleaning Pearl's old room by Winnie leads to her discovery of Pearl's treasure box that contains traces of Pearl's genuine affection towards her father, Jimmy Louie. Cleaning thus erases Winnie's psychic tensions and brings her closer to her daughter, Pearl. This extended metaphor of house work precedes the

gradual unburdening that brings Winnie and Pearl over their emotional divide.

In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Tan brings in a strange liaison between the three generations of women: Winnie's mother, Winnie and her daughter, Pearl. Storytelling allows narrator mother and listener daughter to explore their identities and ascertain their subjectivities. Winnie investigates her relationship with her mother by analysing how maternal absence shapes the contours of her child hood and future life. Winnie's mother subverts the traditional boundaries of patriarchy by stepping out from the institution of marriage and maternal responsibilities. As a radical and rebellious female, she ascertains agency, power and self-sufficiency denied to her in patriarchal motherhood. Taking Winnie for an outing in the Shanghai city, her mother manages to create a crucial moment of mother-daughter bonding. Here, she educates daughter Winnie how to carve out an independent identity by being a nonconformist to the Chinese patriarchal family structure.

Winnie's mother demonstrates valour and self-esteem by turning a rebel against her family by moving out from the institution of marriage. Leaving her feet unbound is one of the noticeable evidences that mark her insurgency. Schooled against Confucius thinking and with a definite sense of history, she understands the magnitude of the historic handicap of Chinese women in their pursuit of liberation. The 'profeminine' education and anti-Confusion strains of reasoning force her to leave her feet unbind. The unbound feet become a signifier that denotes her attempt to liberate herself from the patriarchal bind

of the Chinese Confucian culture. Winnie's mother's love affair with a Marxist student Lu and her subsequent walking out of marriage can be considered as an act of rebellion against patriarchal structures. Despite her love with Lu, she is forced to marry Jiang Sao-yen, a successful textile merchant in Shanghai as his second wife committed suicide. As a replacement, Winnie's mother is dubbed to be his 'Double Second' wife. This debasing vocative serves as a disgrace that voices the patriarchal control of woman through assigning a double and nebulous identity. Rebuffing the position of a 'double second wife' of Jiang Sao-yen, she rejects her motherhood to reclaim her subjectivity. Winnie's mother thus gets labelled as a liberated woman who displays the courage to cut short her hair so as to discover her hidden suppressed identity of a new woman.

Similar to her mother, Winnie also rejects motherhood later in life under stressful circumstances. The recurrent rape and impregnation by Wen Fu persuade Winnie to make abortions as a fateful choice out of necessity. The act of multiple abortions is her mode of self-defining freedom in its hostility to patriarchal vehemence. Both mother and daughter identify themselves through their refusal to succumb themselves to the male defined rules of motherhood. They make the "abandonment of motherhood as an institution both a possibility and an act of freedom/self-definition" (Nnaemeka 18). Winnie shifts her position from the role of a traditional Chinese woman to a liberated new woman over the course of time. She performs the accepted

roles in the life of a Chinese woman during her early years of life. Her evolution from the status of a "*xiannu"* (virtuous unmarried daughter) to "*xianfu"* (virtuous wife) and then to "*xianmu"* (virtuous mother) costs her many personal privileges (Barlow 41). In the maternal absence, Winnie lives under the "domestic matriarchy" of Old Aunt who teaches her how to be a submissive Chinese woman (Conn 26). In her tutoring lecture, she says: "The girl's eyes should never be used for reading, only for sewing. The girl's ears should never be used for listening to ideas, only to orders. The girl's lips should be small, rarely used, except to express appreciation or ask for approval" (*KGW* 102). The relationship with her biological mother becomes "minimized and trivialized in the annals of patriarchy" (Rich 236). In her exclusive predisposition to perceive her mother through the lens of a repressive patriarchy, Winnie collides in the paternal family's demotion of her mother: "For many years, my mother was the source of funny and bad stories, terrible secrets and romantic tales…. I felt so bad to hear them. And yet I could not stop myself from listening. I wanted to know how it could be that my mother left me, never telling me why" (*KGW* 100). Winnie's rejection of Lin's marriage proposal and her subsequent marriage with We Fu as the result of the overbearing influence of Old Aunt confirm her early passiveness. Her words, "I was not angry. I did not know I was supposed to be angry. This was China. A woman had no right to be angry" testify the patriarchal dominance in the society of China (170).

Pearl's affliction of Multiple Sclerosis, which affects a person's movement, mobility and coordination, is metaphorically significant as it suggests both her physical and emotional imbalance. Winnie's inability to come to terms with her traumatic past and Pearl's diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis suggest the imbalance both of them face with respect to their diasporic identities. Winnie considers the displacement from China as the reason for her and her daughter's imbalance. As a Chinese American, Pearl's indifference towards Phil's remark on his regret of getting married into Chinese family reflects her similar feelings about China. When Pearl's dissolution of her Chinese identity is exasperated by her American husband, Phil, she displays a sense of familial obligation through her participation in Chinese family functions. The insistence on Phil's and her daughters' participation in Chinese familial functions speculate Pearl's desire to ensure their recognition of her family's Chinese culture and identity. Another instance of Pearl's inclination towards mother is evident in her explanation of her job to Winnie in a presentable way that will render it suitable and creditable to her mother's Chinese eyes. In the narrative space, the verbal negotiation between mother and daughter becomes "a joint act of knowing and re-knowing the object of study" which "demands a dynamic appropriation of the object" (Shor and Freire 100). The maternal stories modify Pearl's image of Winnie and her own sense of self, with grandmother functioning as a meaningful presence in the life of Winnie and Pearl in America.

The intense ethnic connection is evident as the American granddaughters address Winnie as "*Ha-bu*" (grandmother) (*KGW* 17). Winnie provides language lessons to Pearl through sharing Chinese words like *bao-bao, hau, mingyuan, ying, samfook, ding-ngin, yangsele, tang jie, syauning, syinke* and many others throughout the narrative. By patiently listening to Winnie's ""vuh-vuh-vuh" sounds" (20) of "rapid Chinese," Pearl overcomes her inability to decode the varieties of Chinese vernacular that includes both Shanghainese and Mandarin (19). Tan limits the daughterly voice to the first and final sections of the lengthy narrative. Pearl's reconnection with the ancestral land is facilitated through the life stories of mother and maternal grandmother. Hoping for a reaffirmation of ethnic roots and restoration of their balance, Winnie, Pearl and Helen, plan to make a trip to China. The physical and emotional journey to the ancestral land endorses Pearl's cultural, ethnic and racial connections.

Amy Tan, in *The Kitchen God's Wife*, portrays the extremity of gender violence through the depiction of rape within the institution of marriage. Winnie considers Wen Fu's "*jiatingbaoli*" (domestic violence) as a kind of "normal marital behaviour" in the early years of their marriage (Hellwig and Thobani 215). Through the portrayal of Wen Fu and Winnie, Tan polarizes the equation of male-female bond into a paradigmatic antagonism amid master and slave. Winnie's terrible victimization for dancing with the American officers during the New Year eve beckons Wen Fu's embracement of rigid gender

norms: "That night, with a gun to my head, he raped me, telling me I had lost the privileges of a wife and now had only the duties of a whore…. I did all these things until I was senseless, laughing and crying, all feeling in my body gone" (*KGW* 309). Through the violation of Winnie's body, Wen Fu engages in "a conscious process of intimidation" and "a violent act of degradation and possession" to project his masculine dominance (Messerschmidt 37).

Winnie's distress is compounded by the alienation from her mother who makes a mysterious disappearance when she was only six years old. As the mother's body "provides a bounded sense of space within which security and continuity become possible" the physical and emotional absence of Winnie's mother distorts Winnie's self (Flax 64). In retrospect, Winnie claims that the lack of maternal affection that ascertained her survival from the very beginning designed the course of her life. Both the Chinese mother and daughter remain voiceless and are transmuted by the proliferation of patriarchal ideology. Winnie's perilous trip from Hangchow to Kunming during the final stages of pregnancy becomes a metaphorical journey towards self-realization. Wen Fu's callousness and pregnancy hardships solidify her psyche to traverse the hapless tragic events of her life. Winnie reclaims her body which is lost due to her separation from her mother, submissive life in the foster family and abusive marriage to Wen Fu at Shanghai Island.

The Kitchen God's Wife abounds with the haunting memories of the ghost metaphors. Winnie's narration of Chinese ghost images proffers mystical

and bizarre appeal to the Chinese American Pearl. Winnie's depiction of ghosts as corporeal bodies suggests her fixation with haunting maternal memory. It discusses how the erasure of her Chinese mother at the prime age of six affects Winnie who seeks to establish a sense of identity in the present. Winnie's inclination towards superstitions is grounded on her emotional vacuity following her mother's disappearance. The maternal memories destabilize Winnie's sense of self and mother continues to be a haunting presence in her life in America. As a daughter, Winnie's unnamed mother continues to be significant in her life, as she reminisces about their relationship and affirms that she longs for maternal presence:

> In my heart, there is a little room. And in that room is a little girl, still six years old. She is always waiting, an achy hoping, hoping beyond reason. She is sure the door will fly open, any minute now. And sure enough, it does, and her mother runs in. And the pain in the little girl's heart is instantly gone, forgotten. Because now her mother is lifting her up, high up in the air, laughing and crying, crying and laughing, "*Syinke, syinke!* There you are!" (*KGW* 109)

Foregrounding the memories of the absent mother, Winnie shares the significant fact that maternal absence arrests daughter's development in several ways. Winnie indirectly ascertains the truth that her childhood experiences leave a mark upon her future 'mothering' of her daughter, Pearl. Her limitations as a mother and wife are the results of a physically absent mother.

As “leftovers from [her] mother’s disgrace,” Winnie’s relocation to Tsungming Island signifies her vulnerability (112).

In *The Kitchen God’s Wife*, the greenhouse in the ancestral house in China has a significant role in the life of Winnie. The association of matrilineal links to the greenhouse is demonstrated through Winnie’s memories of her mother’s portrait painting stored in the greenhouse. The painting provides psychosomatic security to Winnie who suffers deep sense of up rootedness and dislocation due to relocation from her family house after mother’s disappearance. Her physical removal from her ancestral home and mother speaks of the irrevocable losses to which she responds by connecting with the comforts of the greenhouse with her mother. The greenhouse serves as a “densely signifying marker in ideology” (Kirby 27) and a “walled site of belonging” that breeds a sense of subjectivity through connexion with the family and maternal home (21). The greenhouse becomes a symbolic space of her entry into the western world and the psychic construction of her identity. Winnie familiarizes herself with the western hobbies like gardening from the greenhouse. Therefore, Pearl’s American affinities are not unfamiliar to Winnie who inhabited China with American influences. Winnie grows in maturity and security within the greenhouse abandoned by the rest of the family. Years later, during her terrible life with Wen Fu at the back drop of war, Winnie longs to seek refuge in the greenhouse. As Winnie attests,

> This pavilion reminded me of the greenhouse on the island…. I was

> longing to be back at that place where I had hidden myself, where I pretended to be lost, where I imagined somebody would find me. I was remembering my poor little broken treasures: my mother's painting, the wings of a butterfly that crumbled into dust, a dried flower bulb that I watered every day, thinking it would grow into a fairy maiden who could be my playmate. (*KGW* 181)

The lack of mother in Winnie's life signals her unanticipated entry into the hegemonic world of patriarchy. Sharing the memories of her abandoned mother allows Winnie to liberate herself from the suffocating past experiences. Later, Winnie equates her mother's dilemmas to the gender biased principles of Confucius and not her missionary western education: "I don't know why everyone always thought Confucius was so good, so wise. He made everyone look down on someone else, women were the lowest!" (103). Her criticism advocates her affinity towards western education and the exigency of women's liberation. Winnie's act of 'rememoration' in America "turns the present of narrative enunciation into the haunting memorial of what has been excluded, excised, evicted, and for that very reason becomes the *unheimlich* space for the negotiation of identity and history" (Bhabha 284). Winnie thus re-establishes her maternal connection in her mother's absence.

Winnie restructures and reorganizes her past memories to make sense of her life. The feminist projection of traumatic experiences through the appropriation of past events by Winnie leads to "a restoration of the

disjunctures (sic) of the past" (Carsten 16). The recollection becomes the creative process of replication that identifies the resilience amassed by Winnie to restructure her life in America. Anchored in the exodus experience, Winnie presents her life story as a testimony with "confessional," "spiritual," "political" and "judicial" aspects (Chau Nguyen 8). She positions herself in a communal structure and interlinks her personal tragedies with the entire Chinese women community. By reiterating private life episodes at the backdrop of war, she plays the multiple roles of a guardian, translator and archivist of Chinese diasporic tradition.

Winnie adopts two cyclical and alchemical journeys during two significant periods in her life time. The first one is the Chinese journey which involves the relationship between Winnie and her mother. The closure of the first journey witnesses the liberation of Winnie's body from the patriarchal dominance of Wen Fu. The objectification of body by Wen Fu overtly denies Winnie's right to her own body. Pregnancy and impending motherhood strengthens and motivates her to protest Wen Fu's rapes: "Stop! I said. And then I said louder and louder. "Stop!" Stop!" Wen Fu stopped and frowned at me. I had never shouted at my husband that way. May be it was because of the baby inside me. May be that's what made me want to protect myself" (*KGW* 187). Winnie's courage to oppose Wen Fu is her significant step towards her reclamation of her body and voice. But the abortions that she faces after this incident also indicate her helplessness and lack of choice. Winnie has to

protect her unborn children from Wen Fu's temper. Here motherhood at the same time strengthens and weakens her spirit. She articulates her estrangement from her body as she explains to Pearl thus:

> So now maybe you think I killed lots of babies, and I didn't care either. I did not mean I wanted to kill those babies. That bad man was using my body. Every night he used it, as if it were - what? - a machine! Today you teach your daughters to say to a stranger, "My body is my body. Don't touch me." A little child can say this. I was a grown woman, and I could not say this. I could only stop those babies from coming. (312)

Winnie re-establishes her identity as an individual after her return to her mother's place at Shanghai. She comprehends the power of her body as she experiences the ordeals of marriage. She realizes sexuality not as a torture but as something to be shared and desired by woman also. Winnie's reclamation of her body signifies her attempts to appreciate the final lessons her mother endeavours to inculcate in Winnie before her disappearance. It also denotes Winnie's appraisal of her mother's secret recipe of life -- "happiness depended on finding an immediate answer to every wish" (95). During their final day together, by teaching Winnie the importance of listening, speculating, counting, and stitching, her mother acquaints her with the promises of the world enhanced by sensory perception.

The next significant Chinese American journey involves the relationship

between Winnie and Pearl in America. Even when Winnie assumes material freedom of her body in China, she carries to America the devastating impact of patriarchy upon her feminine psyche that silences her. When Winnie hides from Pearl the secret behind Pearl's parentage, Pearl hides her medical condition of Multiple Sclerosis from her mother. The art of secrecy can be understood as a "[strategy] of reticence" as utilized by Winnie "to tell the forbidden and name the unspeakable" (Curti 147). The withholding of terrible secrets from each other by mother and daughter is not out of insincerity. Here secrets serve a "stability maintenance function" that allow them not to further enmesh the already strained mother-daughter relationship (Miller 140). Winnie utilizes her self-imposed silence as a coping strategy that enables her to supress her painful memories. It is a kind of "self-imposed amnesia" that provides Winnie a "strong element of tacit consensus" to hide her catastrophic past (Lary 247). Her choice to break her forty year silence becomes an act of self-empowering. When Winnie decides to disclose the secrets to Pearl, she "enters the act of creating his/ herself as both subject and object" (Fagundes and Blayer 138). Similarly when Pearl shares her illness with Winnie, she establishes a corporeal and cultural unity with her mother.

In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Tan designs a streamlining of the paradigmatic illustration of woman from a traditionalist, conventional, subservient wife and mother to a more radical one based on feminist doctrines through the metaphor of mirror. As a catoptrical imagery, mirror functions as

a trope for female intersubjectivity that allows the possibility of mutual recognition between women as subjects. As a typical narcissistic woman, Winnie's Chinese mother's gaze into the mirror projects her female double that capacitates her escape from the male defined world. The mirror image of a 'Double Second' wife persuades her to split her 'self' into two by 'othering' the reflected image. Refusing to live the rest of her life as a Double Second wife, she would "spend many hours in front of her mirror, accusing the double second that stared back at her" (*KGW* 93). Here, the mirror gazing becomes a political act that echoes the ways in which she attains self-definition and sustains a unified subjectivity. Her smashing of the mirror image before abandoning home can be considered as a possibility of breaking stereotypical structures. In her case, mirror disrupts the barrier between reality and reflection thus permitting the physical unification of mind and body. Similar to her mother, Winnie also participates in gazing at her mirror image in search of her 'self.' She searches in her mirrored face for the goodness that pilot friend, Gan saw in her: "I would recall this many times…, I would get up quietly and look in the mirror. I would turn my face back and forth, trying to imagine Gan's eyes looking at me" (205). Winnie's cousin, Peanut likewise discards her reflection so as to reclaim her independent identity. Amassing the courage to cast off a '*zibuyong*' (homosexual) husband and become a Communist, Peanut reshapes her mirror image. By abandoning Old Aunt's gift of silver mirror, Peanut affirms her obstinacy in revolting against traditional

womanhood defined by patriarchy. Working as a vital motif, mirror reconstructs the identity and subjectivity of women in insolence to male arbitration.

Amy Tan, in *The Kitchen God's Wife*, utilizes language as a system of 'kairotic rhetoric' to validate the modulations in the mother-daughter relationship. As a tool for feminist means, language acts a powerful signifier in the novel. 'Kairos' is the opportune time to say or do the exact or appropriate thing. Kairotic rhetoric, in the text, plays a significant role in emphasizing the severity of the psychological distance between the mother and the daughter. 'Kairos' also acts as an interpretative strategy that allows the mother and the daughter who demand cultural action through evoking moments of psychological crises. In the case of this mother-daughter pair, the kairosis acts as a medium that facilitates a breakage in the balance created by 'doxa' (opinion) that allows the mother and the daughter to reverse the previous expectations and judgements about each other. The opening line of the narrative presents the kairotic rhetoric that underscores the tension amid the Chinese mother, Winnie and the American-born daughter, Pearl: "Whenever my mother talks to me, she begins the conversation as if we were already in the middle of an argument" (3). The exchanges between the mother and the daughter are influenced by their cultural backgrounds and their previous experiences with each other. Pearl considers her mother as a strange woman who evaluates the world through the lens of fate, superstitions and cultural

values. Pearl's stance at the beginning of the novel reflects Winnie as an eccentric, grouchy old Chinese woman. In order to escape from the irritable dialogues and petulant discussions, Pearl deliberately hides her medical condition of Multiple Sclerosis from her mother. Pearl elucidates:

> To this day it drives me crazy, listening to her various hypotheses, the way religion, medicine and superstition all merge with her own beliefs. She puts no faith in other people's logic -- to her, logic is a sneaky excuse for tragedies, mistakes and accidents. And according to my mother, nothing is an accident. She's like a Chinese version of Freud, or worse. Everything has a reason. Everything could have been prevented. (29)

Winnie's discovery of Pearl's secret treasure box happens to be one of the major kairotic moments that alleviate the tension between the mother and the daughter. The secret box of Pearl that contains father Jimmy's funeral card with many black angry marks explains her hidden sorrow over her father's death. This transformative moment allows Winnie to rethink her formulated impressions about Pearl: "Right then I realized I was wrong. Right away I wanted to call Pearl and tell her, 'Now I know. You were sad. You were crying, if not outside, then inside" (84). This incarnate moment of kairosis allows Winnie to have a radically altered apprehension and an epistemological revelation of her daughter's real self.

During the disclosure of her traumatic past to Pearl, Winnie critically

analyses the patriarchal structure of the Kitchen God myth that privileges man to abuse his wife within the institution of marriage. Her subversion of myth announces the proficiency of kairotic moments to facilitate a revaluation of values. After Pearl's announcement of her illness to Winnie, Pearl confronts her mother in a radically new way: "[Winnie] was tearing it away -- my protective shell, my anger, my deepest fears, my despair. She was putting all this into her heart, so that I could finally see what was left. Hope" (402). The kairotic process of speaking and listening established between Winnie and Pearl thus repair their injured relationship.

The Kitchen God's Wife projects a Chinese mother who finds it hard to narrate her 'too complicated' past to her Americanized daughter in a non-fluent language. Winnie renders past in the form of a cultural narrative through which she explains "not what happened, but why it happened, how it could not be any other way" (100). Winnie's schemata of narration of her past in English language flavoured with Chinese ways of organizing sentences allows Pearl to understand both her broken English and Chinese words that has no English translation. Winnie's choice of English language to communicate her past is indicative of her attempts to compromise with her daughter, Pearl. She makes appropriate use of English-Chinese code switching in the novel. Here code-switching is a strategy adopted by Winnie to inform Pearl about her ethnic identity. As she describes the word '*taonan*' to Pearl, Winnie points out, "Oh, there is no American word I can think of that means the same thing.

But in Chinese, we have lots of different words to describe all kinds of troubles" (207). Winnie brings out the horrifying aspects of the war through the word '*taonan.*' The twelfth chapter titled "Taonan Money" describes '*taonan'* as a hazardous situation and a state of mind induced by the risk of jeopardy. Winnie's description of the word, '*taonan'* defines it as a collective tragedy and a collective memory of trauma which reflects the veracity of the exodus and its mythical facet. The Chinese language becomes the symbol of her identity and the indicator of China's cultural and linguistic specificity.

In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Amy Tan positions the life of young Winnie/ Weili in the historical China between early 1920s and late 1940s. Tan personalizes Chinese history by positioning mother Winnie's life story at the backdrop of Sino Japanese war. The period witnessed not only the Japanese invasion of China but also the political turmoil in the cities of China due to the conflicts between "the old revolutionaries, the new revolutionaries, the Kuomintang and the Communists, the warlords, the bandits, and the students…." (166). Tan conveys the strength and resilience of Chinese women by incorporating in Winnie's personal account, the devastating experiences of Sino-Japanese war. Avoiding the irking historical reverberations of the horrifying episodes associated with war, Tan details the political manipulations of Chiang Kai-shek, Japanese air raiding various parts of China and other political upheavals through the recollections of Winnie. Winnie's life narration becomes a political tool that discloses Pearl's attention towards the bygone

political condition and ontological location of China. The feminist rendition of the war and its calamities exemplified through the first hand experiences of Winnie highlight Chinese females' spiritual defiance, their insistent and incessant survival and perseverance. As the wives of air pilots, Winnie and Hulan's accounts of war are genuine documents of the conditions of Chinese citizens, especially women during warfare. Their escape from the "bombs [that] fell on Shanghai..., on the roofs of houses and stores, on streetcars, on hundreds of people, all Chinese" insinuate their physical and psychological challenges of survival during the war years in China (230). Winnie also makes references to the dreadful Rape of Nanking of 1937. The Japanese soldiers entered the then capital city of China, Nanking where they did mass rapes, executions and public beheadings:

> [The Japanese soldiers] raped old women, and little girls, taking turns with them, over and over again. Sliced them open with a sword when they were all used up. Cut off their fingers to take their rings. Shot all the little sons, no more generations. Raped ten thousand, chopped down twenty or thirty thousand, a number is no longer a number, no longer people. (234)

Tan blends the paroxysms of the macrocosmic Nanjing Massacre with the microcosmic challenging family life as experienced by Winnie. Winnie's repeated rape by her husband Wen Fu and her weakness equates with resulting overhangs of both the despotic Chinese patriarchy and the helpless China

under Japan. Although Winnie describes all these events in the temporally and spatially distant America, the sharpness with which she narrates the incidents resonate the plaguing historical event encountered by the Chinese nationals. Wen Fu's psychotic behaviour in the hospital kitchen, physical mistreat of their daughter Yiku and his apathy to the responsibility of the deaths of two women goes parallel with the intrusion of Japanese troops into the territory of China. Winnie transforms herself from an obedient, traditional wife to a courageous, defiant woman as she realizes the insecurity of her married life with Wen Fu. The transformation that Winnie undergoes in the narrative charts her competitive relationship with her fellow beings as well as her own relationship to her traumatic past and her mother. Winnie resituates her personal narration within a larger discourse of race and class which includes sexism and racism in traditional China.

The motif of food which manifests in the form of festive dinners performs several momentous functions in the lives of the characters in the novel. Celebratory banquets and elite dinners bring individuals together, familiarize new characters, and at times create arguments or aggravate prevailing tensions. Serving as an artifice of plausibility, a linkage/ division between past and present, traditional and modern, old generation and new generation, Chinese gastronomies influence the characters during the different stages of their lives. Winnie arrests the attention of her daughter, Pearl through the elaborate portrayal of culinary delights in China. The implication

of Chinese New Year in the lives of Chinese is communicated to Pearl through the enlistment of a long appetizer menu. Food, as an entity, is vastly ritualized that helps to replicate and establish the principles of cheerful and united kinfolk. For a Chinese woman like Winnie, the memory of the Chinese cuisines provides ethnic and ancestral camaraderie and consistency. Winnie's declaration of her culinary memories pronounces her feelings of belonging, expectation and contentment at these domestic activities in which she partakes:

> And later I watched Old Aunt in the kitchen. She was ordering the cooks to chop more meat and vegetables. And then she checked all her supplies. She lifted the lids on jars of peanut oil, soy sauce, and vinegar, smelled each one. She counted the number of fish swimming in a wooden bucket, the number of ducks and chickens pecking in the courtyard…. I learned all those lessons for my future. (113-114)

Food is figurative of luck and prosperity according to Chinese beliefs. After her marriage to Wen Fu, Winnie dedicates her time and vigour to cook multiple Chinese cuisines for Wen Fu and his fellow pilots for proffering fortuity. As a fortune indicator, the dishes hopefully provide long life and victory to the war pilots:

> And then I decided to include a few dishes with names that sounded lucky…. -- sun-dried oysters for wealth; a fast-cooked shrimp for laughter and happiness; fatsai, the black-hair fungus that soaks up

> good fortune; and plenty of gelly fish, because the crunchy skin always made a lively sound to my ears. (198)

Tan utilizes the food motif to configure the temperament of the characters in the novel through the explanation of their food inclinations and dining habits. Winnie memorizes her mother's cultural puzzlement as she prefers both western English cookies and Chinese sea food made out of a little fish, *wah-wahyu*. The slight variances and cacophony between Winnie and Helen is portrayed through their choice of grocery from the market. The choice of food shows the two women's conflicting outlooks on life. When Winnie considers the three day old fish as stale and inedible, Helen understands it as only has three days of maturity. This instance allows Winnie to prove the stark contrast in their upbringings -- that Winnie is from an affluent family and Helen lacks refinement and possesses rough rustic manners.

Food also forms the medium of on-going culinary rivalry between Winnie and Helen which ironically points out their Americanized daughters' ineptness in preparing Chinese dishes. Winnie's succulent dish, *jiao-zi* or steamed dumplings and Helen's delicious chicken dishes gets replaced from the daughters' menu with American hamburgers and other crockpot recipes. Tan makes the culinary fissure more prominent by pointing out the grandchildren's gastronomic preference of McDonald hamburgers rather than the Chinese dishes made out of jelly fish, beef, pork and chicken. Winnie's

and Helen's clashes are not candid debates, but they represent their way of interaction during their long years of friendship. Verbal fencing about culinary dishes and its preparation reassured the women to live through the Sino-Japanese war. It also fostered their friendship and fortified their connection after their immigration to America. Pearl discerns the verbal clashes between Winnie and Helen as their mode of communication and that they are "not arguing. They are remembering together, dreaming together" (410).

Food acts as a coalescing agent that allows the family and friends to share happiness and sadness together. The act of dining becomes a societal ceremony which possesses ethnic implications and transnational deviations that serves as an affixing knot amid diverse generations. In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, the communal dining is "a way of performing a momentary *communitas* with friends and family, a way of bridging ways of the past and routines of the present time, a dialectic practice shaping our relation with both the natural world of antistructure and the urban realm of work and everyday structure" (Rubin 243). These ceremonial meals in the text cement intergenerational bonds and reinforce social solidarity. Tan projects the shared consumption as a "liminoid phenomenon" which is defined as "a state of being between and betwixt two alternate structures and situations" (240). Bao-bao's engagement dinner at the beginning of the novel, and his subsequent wedding reception towards the end, are such "liminoid" moments during which "hierarchies and differences momentarily fade and all individuals become actors in the same

drama" (240).

Food performs a commemorative function that allows people to travel back time. Different tasty Chinese cuisines help Winnie and Helen to bring in the reminiscence of their mother land to the contemporary life in United States. Cooking Chinese dishes in a distant country like America strengthens the nostalgic value of food through which the women characters develop a sense of national continuity. Food enables Winnie to incorporate herself into her past. When she asks Pearl, "Why do some memories live only on your tongue or in your nose?" she actually links the ability of the homely cuisines to swallow resentment, agony and chagrin (*KGW* 235). As a commemorative device, food, in the novel, connects generations imparting links between past and present, and unites China and America. Winnie's maternal memory is preceded by the remembrance of her mother's favourite English biscuits. She even memorizes the delicious *syen do jang* brought to her room by the servants in the morning of her mother's disappearance. She also invites Pearl's attention by referring to her granddaughter, Cleo's inclination towards this Chinese dish. Winnie's translation of *syen do jang* as "the salty tasting soy milk soup" to Pearl suggests her desire to tighten the culinary thread that connects the six year old Winnie from Shanghai to the three year old Cleo in San Fransisco (97).

In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Tan adopts the food imagery to both

permeate the narrative as well as to structure it. Cooking, devouring and gustatory images reveal Winnie's temperament as she sets her life narrative on the basis of the varied marvels, aromas, flavours and consistencies of Chinese food. Though narrated in a chronological order, Winnie employs a non-linear pattern to describe her confessional narrative to Pearl through a convoluted layering of selected ingredients, one followed by the other. She equates her storytelling techniques with her cooking procedures. Similar to her ability to make delicate dishes with distinguished flavours, "not everything bland or everything hot as the same roaring fire," she designs her flashbacks in a festive manner, finely balancing the entire narrative with sweet reminiscences, piquant tales, and bitter episodes (150). By serving noodle soup and tea halfway the narration, Winnie turns food into an incarnation of her maternal affection towards Pearl. She shows hierarchy within a racial group that attempts to replicate hegemonic standards that determine feminine identity under the hassles of Confucian doctrines.

The wartime communal meals at Winnie's home suggest a visceral experience that allows the partakers to envisage themselves as a cohesive and harmonized community irrespective of class, race and religion. These lavish repasts paradoxically conjure up the prevalent food crisis and famishment at different places in war-ravaged China. The food imagery is adjusted to delineate the city of Nanking during the war by mirroring and recaping the sufferings and anticipations of the hapless woman Winnie. Food also provides

a sense of security to Winnie and Helen. When people suffer during the war crisis, Winnie and Helen are provided with the option to 'choose' rare food not alone to just satisfy their appetite, but to replenish their emotional desires.

Amy Tan brings in a linkage between mothering and kitchen space in the novel, *The Kitchen God's Wife.* Similar to mothering, the kitchen becomes an emotional space that provides nourishment and nurturance. The parameters of the scullery space become a 'symbolic womb' for Pearl who understands the implications of the maternal past by enjoying Winnie's hot noodle soup. In the kitchen space, Pearl learns from Aunt Helen about her mother Winnie. The kitchen thus becomes a gendered space of opinions, debates and disclosure of secrets. In the novel, the kitchen also turns into a contested space where Winnie, Helen and Pearl engage in emotional confrontation and elaborate on gender patterns and hierarchies. Winnie gives a general statement comparing women to a pair of chopsticks in the perspective of men like Wen Fu. Even with the derogatory connotation, chopsticks serve a vital function in Winnie's life. As a precious dowry item, the silver chopsticks restore hope and happiness to Winnie: "I would take out a pair of those chopsticks and hold them in my hand. I would feel the weight of the silver resting in my palm, solid and unbreakable, just like my hopes" (186).

In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, sisterhood accommodates, facilitates, and vindicates both radical and nationalist quests. War inculcates the strong

leitmotif of 'sisterhood' in the novel that signals the drooping of the Confucian paradigm in which women's interrelationships were demarcated and constrained by the patriarchal Chinese society. Advocating a radical interpretation of sisterhood, Tan promotes "kinship" and assigns "considerable textual agency" to the protagonist Winnie (Zhu 24). The metaphor of sisterhood becomes a kind of surrogate motherhood to Winnie that provides mutual nurturance and support to her in her mother's absence. By citing significant examples of strong female bonding and friendship, Winnie opens the possibilities for a friendly and sisterly relationship with her daughter, Pearl. In contrast to Winnie's disappointing married life, sisterhood, both in the form of a social bonding and as an alternative and inspiring means, accomplish her personal and political aspirations.

The female bonding in the form of female friendship/sisterhood in the novel explores female relationships as a metaphor for community. Winnie, within this metaphorical community, ascertains her subjectivity, agency and voice. The sisterly bonding with Peanut, Helen, Auntie Du, Wan Betty and Min allows Winnie to transcend ancestral boundaries and "explore and develop facets of [her] life outside the immediate family" (Picchietti 93). It also allows her to expand sisterhood from "biological and familial realms to a feminist nationalist spectrum" which provide "mutual recognition" and "female intersubjectivity" (Zhu 45). The first sisterly bond Winnie makes is with her cousin, Peanut. Peanut and Winnie call each other as '*tang jie,*' the Chinese

phrase for "sugar sister" that announces the intimate connection between the two despite the frequent clashes amid them (*KGW* 154). The sisterly bond with Peanut allows Winnie to transcend all emotional imbalances in the early stages of her life in her foster family. Peanut's company helps Winnie to overcome the initial stages of grief for her lost mother. Tan positions Peanut as a feminist icon who modifies herself from a naïve domestic girl to a tough, bold rescuer woman by embracing communist doctrines. Peanut encourages women to develop mutual dependence that allows them to disgorge the dreads and humiliations of the past and revamp the potency to await the prospects.

In the narrative space of *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Winnie nurtures a firm bond with Hulan/ Helen. Their friendship becomes a spiritual bonding dating from Sino-Japanese war as young pilots' wives, compelled by war to make frequent displacements and dispossessions and relocates as migrants to be California's Chinese diaspora societies. As Winnie acknowledges her indifference with Helen, she points out the invisible chord that connects them:

> She is not related by blood, not even by marriage. She is not someone I chose as my friend. Sometimes I do not even enjoy her company. I do not agree with her opinions. I do not admire her character. And yet we are closer perhaps than sisters, related by fate, joined by debts. I have kept her secrets. She -- has kept mine. And we have a kind of loyalty that has no word in this country. (82-83)

At a particular point of time, Winnie's transference of her desire for her lost mother to Helen extends their relationship towards the parameters of a vertical mother- daughter relationship: ""Hulan! Hulan!" I shouted. I turned around and people rushed by me, but there was no Hulan…. "Ma!Ma!" I was crying. And I was amazed that those were the words coming out of my throat…. Yet I was walking through the crowd, calling for my mother, looking for Hulan" (216). Helen forms a vital link between Winnie and Pearl who galvanizes the mother-daughter bond by persuading them to share their secrets: "Well, you had a secret, your mother had a secret. I said I was going to die so you would both tell each other your secrets…. "And now you are closer, mother and daughter, I can already see this.…" (408). Devastated by the loss of mother and motherland, sisterhood with Helen provides Winnie a sort of resistance against patriarchal oppression.

Auntie Du, Wan Betty, Min and Little Yu's mother are cameo characters who play critical parts in Winnie's life. Auntie Du emerges as a courageous woman and a mentor who nudges Winnie out of her gullibility towards self-defence, especially in the matters of her married life with Wen Fu. Similarly Wan Betty, the telegraph operator in Nanking and later in Shanghai helps Winnie to get divorce from Wen Fu and years later, informs Winnie, through Helen, about Wen Fu's death. Min, Wen Fu's concubine, provides emotional relief to Winnie during her postpartum days. The different shades of relationship between Winnie as Wen Fu's wife and Min as her husband's

concubine highlight Winnie's humanitarian nature. Little Yu's mother is peanut's companion in the management of a Shanghai way station for fugitive wives. Winnie reinvents herself by appropriating and transforming despotic spaces into distinctive social realms through companionship, sisterhood and unanimity with these female figures.

The final chapter witnesses Winnie's naming of the new goddess after her first stillborn daughter, Mochou Sorrowfree. Winnie's resurrection of Lady Sorrowfree in America is significant in many ways. She amasses the courage to denounce the male patriarchal Kitchen God by removing his picture from the altar and demanding him to "go to hell down below" (43). Her criticism of cultural knowledge can be considered as her choice to transvalue her gendered traditions in a new way. Offering the statue of Lady Sorrowfree to Pearl, Winnie says,

> She is ready to listen. She understands English. You should tell her everything.... She will listen.... See her name: Lady Sorrowfree, happiness winning over bitterness, no regrets in this world. Now help me light three sticks of incense. The smoke will take our wishes to heaven. Of course, it's only superstition, just for fun. But see how fast the smoke rises - oh, even faster when we laugh, lifting our hopes, higher and higher. (532)

By placing an English speaking Chinese goddess inside the altar, Winnie attempts to amalgamate and incorporate her Chinese cultural tradition with the

new cultural context of America. Winnie thus calls for a transvaluation of ethics that surfaces only after a critical obliteration breaks open new vistas. Bella Adams comments:

> By replacing the Kitchen God, an unfaithful husband who became a fearsome god under dubious circumstances not with Mrs Kitchen God, but with Lady Sorrowfree, Winnie redresses the gender asymmetries within Chinese mythology apart from an 'upside-down' sexism compatible with patriarchal ideology. (*Amy Tan* 95)

In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Tan authenticates "how the reformulation of the mother-daughter relationship can potentially destabilize and disrupt patriarchal structures, and allow women to construct an identity that is founded on mutual recognition of and love for the mother, as both a woman and a mother" (Irigaray and Green 101). Winnie and her Chinese mother do not represent the stereotypical female sufferers. These two women participate in transgressing the accepted boundaries of womanhood by reinforcing a different maternal ideology that challenges gender and class hierarchies. Winnie and her mother thus engage in a "metapatriarchal" process through which they reform not patriarchy, but their own selves (Daly 7). The female bond that extends from the triad of grandmother, mother and daughter is powerful in delineating their subjectivities. The life stories of grandmother and mother detoxify Pearl's ambivalent state of mind by preserving and transferring values of Chinese racial and cultural heritages against erasure.

Chapter IV

Semiotics of Feminine Memoirs: *The Bonesetter's Daughter*

The Bonesetter's Daughter (2001) authenticates the strong affective and communicative dimensions of feminine self-writing. It provides the women protagonists with ideally referential paradigms of self-definition. Amy Tan's textual construction represents the parameters of relationships amid three generations of women who examine the construction of their subjectivity and ethnic identity. The text clarifies the competence of written narratives to chisel maternal identities that ultimately polishes the subjectivity of the second generation daughters. The female community in the novel considers writing as an act of self-discovery in which the discovery entails the formation of an authentic self. The matrifocal narrative brings to the limelight the life experiences of three women and destabilizes "the traditional notion of mother as an instinctual, purely corporeal being" (Jeremiah 143). The "grandmother-mother-daughter triad" of Tan's narrative space use textual spaces to concede, enfold, negotiate, reunite, defy, and confront established hypotheses of maternal function along with extending optional practices and visions for contemporary mothers (Lorde 7). This "matrilineal narrative" (Cosslett 7) highlights the tradition of "writing back," (Woolf 96) a political action that signifies the continuity with the past, termed by Hirsch as bourgeoning "maternal subjectivity" (*The Mother-Daughter Plot* 197).

The Bonesetter's Daughter can be classified under the genre of biomythography which is defined as "the weaving together of myth, history and biography in epic narrative form, a style of composition that represent all the ways in which we perceive the world" (Warburton 1). The narrative portrays the female characters as feminist autobiographers who attempt to recuperate and retrieve maternal subjectivity by scripting their mothers' stories, in juxtaposition with their own. Amy Tan recounts many of her life episodes in the interstices of stories about the grandmother, mother and daughter in the novel. In the epigraph, before the beginning of the novel, Tan writes: "On the last day that my mother spent on earth, I learned her real name, as well as that of my grandmother. This book is dedicated to them" (*BSD* ii). This dedication to the ancestors indicates how her identity relies on intergenerational matrilineal bonds which prove to be a quest for both her personal and cultural identity. Tan incorporates many personal elements to figure out the main protagonists of the novel. In the text, the mother character, LuLing, matches the description of Tan's mother, Daisy Tan. Tan, in her novel, mythologizes several episodes from her life by interlacing myth and history thus diminishing the narrow line demarcating fact and fiction. By meaningfully melding reality and fantasy, Tan pronounces the multiplicity of the documented self and of the narrative voices to be located in the novel. In her telephonic interview given to *CNN*, Amy Tan gives a detailed account of her many personal experiences that give way to the creation of the novel, *The*

Bonesetter's Daughter:

> It was discovering that my mother had Alzheimers and wanting to spend as long as I could thinking about the ways our lives were intertwined, how her past had evolved my present, and how we have a legacy in our family of pain that extends back -- I don't even know how many generations -- beyond my grandmother, who killed herself. I think there's a lot of strength beside that pain, ability to survive, and I wanted to understand that as well. So the book is intensely personal because of the questions I have and have tried to examine through a story. While some of the details may be similar -- for example, that my mother had Alzheimer's -- the story itself and its structure are fictional. (Tan)

Tan considers the text as a site of regaining and refreshing memories. She utilizes the textual space to identify "how the identity of a central character is crucially formed by her female ancestors" (Podnieks and O'Reilly 20). The text although mentions the presence of fathers and other male figures, the prominent focus is on the female experience which involves anxiety, agony, annoyance, ecstasy and exhilaration. Tan thus attempts to construct a "new feminist generation in relation to the maternal tradition of the past" that "creates the conditions in which mother and daughter would each be able to speak for themselves as well as for and with one another" (Hirsch, *The Mother-Daughter Plot* 16).

The Bonesetter's Daughter testifies the significance of writing memoirs in order to articulate psychic wounds and traumatic experiences that the characters fail to verbally communicate or exteriorize, but can be represented and arbitrated through cultural practices. The written narratives, through the psychoanalytic framework of memory construction, redefine the concept of ethnicity and promote ethnic identity construction. By effectively subverting the patriarchal definitions of femininity and maternal identity, the women characters in the text proceed to occupy a definite potential space for them through this mode of "externalized memory" (Assmann 9). Gu Liu Xin, known as Precious Auntie/ Bao Bomu, the grandmother who lives and dies in China, LuLing Liu Young, the Chinese immigrant mother who spends life's twilight in San Francisco, and Ruth Luyi Young, the Chinese American daughter who engages in a challenging relationship with her mother, pass through various life stages that finally bring them together in the same plane where they erase the cultural, emotional and generational differences. The text investigates how transference of cultures happens through the communication of human memories that span generations. The three women utilize writing strategy to recall, revive and resurface the suppressed and hidden traditional legacies. The mothers seem to be locked within the restraints of the patriarchal society, but they manage to intone a "muted feminism that leads them to recognize and nurture, consciously as well as instinctively, the possibilities for independence and self-fulfilment in their daughters" (Podnieks and O'Reilly 22).

Amy Tan's fictional landscape positions the triad at specific temporal points which influence their subjectivities as ethnic subjects. *The Bonesetter's Daughter* firmly situates the traumatic and survival stories of the grandmother, Precious Auntie (Bao Bomu/ Gu Liu Xin), the mother, LuLing and the daughter, Ruth, in diverse situations, suggestively in the terra firma of the historical China, Hong Kong and San Francisco. The concurrent portrayal of the intergenerational relationships in the text reveals the influence of ethnic culture and immigration on the psychological adjustment of the characters. Precious Auntie, the representative of the radical figure, movingly stands as the matriarch who exists in the feudal China. LuLing, the immigrant mother who retains the life episodes of the pre-revolutionary archaic China and the traumatic Sino-Japanese war, refrains from assimilating into the American cultural practices safeguarding her cultural principles and notions. Ruth, the second generation daughter, figures as the typical American representative with traces of maternal fervour and indistinct cultural roots. These three women remain spiritually bound beyond blood relationship and manage to identify their inherent legacies despite the boundaries that separate them.

The tripartite novel consists of an introductory chapter, seventeen chapters divided into three sections, and an epilogue. The text covers several geographical locations like San Francisco, China, and Hong Kong. The introductory chapter titled "Truth" presents the first person narrative of the mother, LuLing. It presents the vital details related to the life of LuLing: her

two husbands, Pan Kai Jing and Edward Young, her daughter, Ruth Luyi Young, and her mother, Precious Auntie. The first part of the novel, set in present day California, discusses the life of the Chinese American daughter, Ruth, who is on a living relationship with the American, Art Kamen. The seven chapters of part one, written in the third person narrative, concentrates on Ruth's life, her relationships with family and friends and her career. It also zooms in on the selected childhood incidents in reminiscences. She is the Americanized daughter of Chinese LuLing and American Edward. Her hyphenated status traps her in between her conventional mother, LuLing and American partner Art, both representing Chinese culture and Western modernity respectively. Ruth's yearly loss of voice alludes to the symbolic indication of her inability to convey her feelings to LuLing and Art. LuLing's loss of memory due to dementia positions Ruth in a difficult position that demands her to decode her mother's memoir written in Chinese language.

The second part of the novel is the first person narrative of LuLing's memoir in seven chapters, titled concurrently as "Heart," "Change," "Ghost," "Destiny," "Effortless," "Character," and "Fragrance" which report LuLing's and Precious Auntie's lives in China. LuLing's nineteen years of existence with the Liu clan in the Immortal Heart village, emotively described in these seven chapters, integrates both congenial and painful memories. The section amasses the tragic personal histories of LuLing and Precious Auntie positioned against the national histories of feudal China. The text brings in a meticulous

discussion of the substantial traditional practices like bone setting, ink making and the implication of calligraphy. The mother-daughter pair, Precious Auntie and LuLing, passes through demanding life experiences that teach them not to lose hope but to handle the trials with a defiant mind.

The narration again shifts from first person to third person in part three of the novel, sectioned into three chapters and an epilogue. The discovery of LuLing's memoir and its subsequent translation permit Ruth to recognize her mother and her maternal culture which in turn abets her in ascertaining her true self. The final epilogue shows a transformed Ruth returning to her ancestral roots (her mother, grandmother and China), by locating and shaping a sense of self within her position in family history through her act of penning and transliterating her story. By enabling LuLing to tell her personal story in the first person voice, Tan uses language as a powerful instrument to share her traumatic voice. The interlacing of the first and third person viewpoints attempt to separate maternal and daughterly voices. Elizabeth Lyon discusses thus:

> An immediate advantage of dual viewpoints is the development of two characters and their relationship in depth. The reader stays stimulated with two different voices and the greater complexity of relationships of two lives. If one of the viewpoints is the antagonist, the chance for constant conflict, accompanied by understanding of motivation is greater. (159)

While foregrounding the issues concerning women, the dual viewpoints also permit two flawed narratives of mother and daughter to balance out and complement each other.

The Bonesetter's Daughter explores the theme of mother-daughter dyad and the inherent conflicts and tensions amid them, while exploring the issues of self-discovery and quest for identity. While enacting the mother-daughter variances, Tan investigates the power of memory and silence in the novel. The conflict between the first mother-daughter pair, Precious Auntie and LuLing, results from the patriarchal oppression and the patrilineal disposition of Chinese society and related misconceptions. The discrepancy amid the second pair, LuLing and Ruth, who occupy the American land, occurs due to the generational, cultural and linguistic discrepancies. Curbed by patriarchal definitions of the Chinese feudal society, Precious Auntie and LuLing reconstruct their lives through the act of writing their personal histories at different points of time and also through Ruth's act of recalling these documented ancestral histories. Even though in a distant temporal and spatial context, Ruth happens to be the conveyor and mediator of maternal history. Towards the end of the novel, by rewriting the maternal stories, Ruth becomes the collective individual who thinks collectively for several generations.

The Bonesetter's Daughter transliterates the vernacular convention of the Chinese talk story through the strategies of memoirs and book writing. The act of remembering brings the mothers and daughters of the novel in the same

ground where the written narratives recondition and reconnect the lives of these women. "Remembering" for these women "is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful remembering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present" (Bhabha 63). Tan employs the possibility and primacy of written narratives over oral narratives in the text where she makes the daughters decipher the codes of the mothers' text**.** Writing forms an indispensable part of the entire text and the act of writing and written script resonate the entire narrative. Here the process of writing memoirs serves as a persuasive mode of recording past experiences and transferring them to the future generation. Written communication suitably demonstrates the cultural and historical aspects of ethnic language.

The female protagonists in *The Bonesetter's Daughter* diversely employ writing as an act of homecoming and a voyage that induces the similitude of home, belonging and distinctiveness. They realize the conscious and cautious act of conserving explicitly assembled interactive messages. The tales recited through the written scripts foreground "what is overtly threatening to the powerful into covert images of resistance so that they can live on in times when overt struggles are impossible or build courage in moments when it is…. They bring to the surface factors which would otherwise disappear or at least go very far underground" (Mohanty 79). For LuLing, the remembering and scripting of her memoir are occasions of historical, cultural and personal

processes of recovery. Her intention of writing her and her mother's past story thus forms a significant literary and ethnic signifier that echoes as a genre and an endowment to the construction of cultural memory. Precious Auntie's life story within LuLing's memoir transcends the definitions of "feminine practice of writing" which cannot be "theorized, enclosed, [and] encoded" within the phallocentric system (Cixous 46). LuLing's appropriation of maternal stories of past events before her birth signals her identification not only with the Liu Clan family, but with a group in the whole Immortal village.

The Bonesetter's Daughter examines the power of the written words and the language power of the ancestors in conveying the exact meaning intended. Writing, for Precious Auntie, is an act of documented articulation that opens up the space in which her blurred identity, both personal and communal, is finally shaped and refined. LuLing adopts writing strategy to construct home as "a textual container" that enables her to forge a textual identity (Grice 202-203). Ruth's ghost-writing endows her with a veritable open space that facilitates her to challenge her liminal presence in the racial and patriarchal environment. The cultural and personal memories of China, revitalized through the Chinese characters imprinted on several pages by Precious Auntie and LuLing, become the reference document for the second generation daughter Ruth. The stories of the grandmother and mother thus turn into artefacts that preserve its permanence. LuLing while writing her autobiography produces an

errorless and clear text that becomes the historical and inheritable life document for her daughter Ruth. As LuLing is simultaneously a mother and a daughter, her life writing remains a crucial act that operates to the identity formation of her mother Precious Auntie and her daughter Ruth. LuLing utilizes the strategy of two distinct voices of a mother and a daughter to enhance the poise of her mother and to transfer the inner maternal strength to her daughter. The novel ends with Ruth's attempt to claim literal identity and actual terrain for herself and for her mother and grandmother through the refreshed avenue of life writing.

The Chinese art of calligraphy known as "*shufa*" is dynamically represented in Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (Dong 209). Dingbo defines calligraphy thus: "Chinese calligraphy is an art of lines, the structuring of lines, and the harmonious and rhythmic motion of lines. It presents a form of beauty that does not rely on realistically copying nature, but, instead, depends on abstraction" (Murphy 307). The three women circulate the art form as a cultural memory to create learned and communal groups to transcend the temporal-spatial and societal confines of their individualities and even symbolize themselves as writers of their life histories. Precious Auntie recognizes the hidden strength of writing and teaches LuLing the significance of "writing characters, how a person must think about her intentions, how her *ch'i* flowed from her body into her arm, through the brush, and into the stroke" (*BSD* 269). LuLing's comprehension of the calligraphic art has thus an

ethnic and ancestral implication. Ruth learns the art of writing from LuLing in a distant country. Here the transmission of the national tradition across the boundary suggests the formation of an imaginary homeland in America.

The ink, a pervasive motif, associated with the script of calligraphy is feminized in Tan's novel *The Bonesetter's Daughter*. Tan broadens the role of women by turning them as cultural agents in the patriarchal society. Ink symbolizes the authority and tenacity of the written word. Its vitality is understood by the grandmother and mother who compose their history that finally becomes the life story of the Chinese American daughter Ruth. Precious Auntie realizes the power of the ink stick and the ink stone to purify "the mind and the heart" (225). LuLing's father figure, Teacher Pan endorses the significance of writing through his comment "once you put ink to paper, it becomes unforgiving again. You can't change it back. If you made a mistake, the only remedy is to throw away the whole thing" (295). Calligraphy thus happens within a galvanized maternal space that unites the mothers to the daughters, who are consequently liable for passing on this cultural knowledge. Ruth learns to write her own story in Asian America just as Precious Auntie and LuLing compose their respective stories in China and America. Despite the fact that Ruth must defy her ancestors so as to establish her personal identity, she remains meticulously allied to her Chinese mother's calligraphic tradition. Writing thus becomes an intrepid and subversive form of penned expression transferred from mother to daughter across cultures and continents.

Apart from ink writing, two other diverse forms of writing- sand writing and journal writing -- are exploited in the novel to express Ruth's sense of anger, remorse, love, and her hidden inexplicable feelings towards her mother. At the age of six, she discovers a more tactful way of dealing with her Chinese mother by presaging self-designed invisibility and silence. She fakes to lose voice after a schoolyard accident that opens her possibilities of sand writing and the ensuing surge of power over her mother. Sand becomes the platform of Ruth's resilient voice that helps her appease her senses, making intelligent choices to move to San Francisco and even in opining matters regarding stock exchanges. Through this mode of writing, Tan incorporates 'sand' as a metaphor that allows Ruth to bring alterations to her future and destiny. Sand tray allows Ruth to communicate with the spirit of Precious Auntie. In this context, ""the dead returns, not to bear ancestral curses but to act as the writer's muse." [Sand] writing, in this instance, is a potent metaphor for both the act of cultural negotiation and translation as well as a metafictional reflection on the act of writing itself" (Feng 64).

Journal writing also grants her similar power to dishearten her mother. The journal that represents Ruth's psychic tensions becomes the symbol of her stressful life with her mother. Her intentional silencing of the facts within the diary reflects on her suppression of emotional trauma. The several episodes of sand writing and journal writing indicate Ruth's struggle to assert her creative sensibilities and innovative impulses spontaneously. Ruth records in her diary

thus:

> "I hate her! She's the worst mother a person could have. She doesn't love me. She doesn't listen to me. She doesn't understand anything about me. All she does is pick on me, get mad, and make me feel worse…. You talk about killing yourself, so why don't you ever do it? I wish you would. Just do it, do it, do it! Go ahead, kill yourself! Precious Auntie wants you to, and so do I!" (*BSD* 159)

Ruth, here, utilizes writing as a means of resistance. For young Ruth, writing forms the only means to dominate her mother. Tan presents Ruth's use of the journal as an attempt to assess objectively and precisely her hidden anger and anxieties against her mother in the hopes that the diary will assist her to see how to subjugate her domineering Chinese mother. LuLing's fatal step of jumping out through the window to commit suicide, after Ruth's psychic wounding of her mind and spirit through her remarks in the diary, pronounces the ruinous vigour of Ruth's authorship. Tan, here, ascribes symbolic dimensions to windows through which the characters venture and alter their lives. Ruth hopes to discover a fresh and revitalizing way to live by fixing her eyes through the window's vantage point. LuLing considers window as a symbol of vengeance, frustration, and sacrifice. She regards it as a negative imagery and decides to kill herself jumping out of the windowsill. For Ruth, the window becomes an archetypal symbol for her ambivalence as she vacillates between filial devotion and deviation.

Ruth's belief that "Writing what you wished was the most dangerous form of wishful thinking" prevents her from writing her past experiences. Her choice of career as a ghost writer provides her the opportunity to mould the lives of others without affecting her life in any manner. However she realizes the significance of original composition as she reads her mother's translated life story. The mothers, Precious Auntie and LuLing write memoirs to reconsider their tormented relationship with their daughters, LuLing and Ruth respectively. Precious Auntie's memoir plays a reflective and intricate role in her life. The memoir is a response to her life experiences, the ways in which she negotiates herself and her role in the transmission of Chinese culture. The subjectivity derived as a result of literary exchange gives them a "sense of personal autonomy, continuous identity, a history and agency in the world" (Cosslett 6). The powerful legacy of writing empowers Ruth to progress from a ghost writer to a writer with a definite individuality. More than a documentation of the life stories of the women characters, the memoirs of the text assist the women to articulate about and for a broader community. The memoirs thus become dynamic interpolations which turn into additional resources for cultural edifice.

The novel powerfully foregrounds how writing technique liberates women from the silenced position while reclaiming and recovering their histories. The mothers and daughters in the text harness silence as a powerful mode to discover potency, pursue meaning, and cultivate the hidden sense of connection

and community with each other. “Silence as demonstrated here is a strategy of resistance to the noisy worlds of a false discourse on authenticity” (O’Reilly, *From Motherhood to Mothering* 97). The text empowers silence as “a decision, a matter of will, and not a disease or a mystery” (*BSD* 10). The women at the centre of the text rely on silence which is evoked as a special mode of articulation to elicit specific desired effects. Silence becomes a “rebellion,” “survival mechanism” and “a testament to resilience” (Espin 173). The three women experience the waves of silence both by patriarchal pressures and by choice. Both Precious Auntie and LuLing experience cultural miscommunication that arrests their voice during their life time. Ruth, though in a distinct geographical space, too becomes voiceless which is an inheritance of her Chinese half. Ruth’s dilemma focuses on her split identity and her reclamation of identity happens with her comprehension of her mother’s true self.

Beyond acting as a mere trope, silence, in this text, functions as a means of resistance, domination, subversion, protection, survival, communication, suppression, subjugation, compliance, and empowerment. Silence, for Precious Auntie, is not only a restrictive and disenfranchising quality that suppresses her individuality, but also a proficient and powerful articulation of voice that cleanses her Chinese female identity. When Precious Auntie’s silence curtails her maternal identity, it indicates passivity and suggests sustained action at the same time. In her case, “silence is an action that might be imposed by self

(e.g. self-censorship), people within [her society] (e.g. groups that subjugate a person's identity and subjectivity), the culture at large (e.g. a sociocultural system that makes certain individuals and groups invisible and unintelligible), or a combination of the above" (Malhotra and Rowe 149). Verbal silencing strengthens her subjectivity and projects her "will not to say or a will to unsay" (Minh-ha 373). Her silence accompanied by "hand- talk, face- talk and chalk-talk" modulates into a communicative tool that is as powerful as sounds of speech (*BSD* 2). For Precious Auntie, the will to ""unsay" is an act of refusal, to push back at hegemonic forces, to fight against domination" (152). As her silence is both imposed and connected with bad luck, her silence, at certain points of time, turns into her vulnerability. She remains at the mercy of the interpreter, LuLing who forms her link with the outer world. As a site of struggle and strategy, LuLing's silence becomes "a part of production of power" (Duncan 14). Silence provides her the ability to dominate her mother during her life in China, and her daughter at a later stage in America. Her silence curtails the voice of Precious Auntie who turns out to be an absent presence: "Precious Auntie tugged my sleeve. I ignored her. Lately I had done this a few times, and it infuriated Auntie. Since she could not speak and Mother could not read, when I refused to talk for her, she was left wordless, powerless" (*BSD* 216). Luling's silence, later in America, even reflects the insufficiency of an adequate English vocabulary to elaborate on her emotional experiences. She realizes that her "social and psychic existence can best be

represented in [the] tenuous survival of maternal language itself; which allows her memory to speak" (Bhabha 11).

Ruth utilizes the strategy of silence as a form of resistance and confrontation to recuperate the truncated communication lines between herself and her mother. The chance to experience LuLing's "maternal empathy" persuades Ruth to continue her silence for a period of time (Chodorow 85). She even realizes the magical power of silence to minimize her ostracized status in the company of her Caucasian school friends. Later in life, Ruth even schedules to observe silence as a ritual on a yearly basis that, in her opinion, enables her "to sharpen [her] consciousness about words and their necessity" (*BSD* 10). This yearly ritual of silence implies two different things. Signalizing Ruth's imbalance with her Chinese and American halves, the ceremonial silence as a form of catharsis also permits her to contemplate on her hyphenated status in America. Silence also performs the function of a therapy that heals her entire being and polishes her power of expression. Here, "Silence is […] a quality (e.g. peacefulness), state (e.g. moment of silence), place (e.g. a site in the practice of self-contemplation), and expression (e.g. to register social protest) associated with individual inner and outer worlds, social activities, and cultural events" (Malhotra and Rowe 149). Ruth's quest for inherent meanings of life and relationships with people around her is rooted in her voluntary silence.

Akin to the concept of silence, Tan introduces the astral phenomenon of

shooting stars to illustrate the estrangement and the hidden connection among these women. The three women of three generations give diverse interpretations to the phenomenon of shooting stars. Ruth, the Chinese American daughter believes in the scientific explanation that defines the phenomenon as "fragments of meteors penetrating the earth's atmosphere, burning up in their descent" (*BSD* 9). Whereas, LuLing finds a distinct clarification to the phenomenon and in her opinion, "shooting stars were really "melting ghost bodies" and it was bad luck to see them…. That meant a ghost was trying to talk to you" (9). For Precious Auntie shooting stars happen to be the allegory of her life. Liu Xin/ Precious Auntie is similar to a shooting star as her life is also short and bright. Her prospective husband, Hu sen compares her speech to the "language of the shooting stars, more surprising than sunrise, more brilliant than the sun, as brief as sunset" (191).

Silence in *The Bonesetter's Daughter* participates in the enunciation and legitimization of personal memories through ethnic narratives. The novel highlights the resuscitative power of memory which provides a meaningful genealogical nexus amid generations. The memory becomes an intersubjective event as it includes the "recollection of past by a subject" [and] "recollection for another subject" (Davis 27). The mixing up of the life events of Precious Auntie and LuLing in LuLing's memoir and LuLing's unintentional inclusion of daughter Ruth in her past life suggest the relevance of the past in the present. The maternal memory becomes a crucial "act of cultural recovery" (Hall 18-19).

The individual expression of the women protagonists in the narrative space synthesizes "re-presentation- [the] ritual [that] gives way to textual coherence" (Assmann 4). The women in the text reconstruct cultural connection through establishing link between memory and writing. Here writing forms the part of cultural memory as they act as mechanisms that bequeath the cultural meaning down the lineage. Memories refine "narrative forms and strategies toward reclaiming a suppressed past and helps the process of re- visioning that is essential to gaining control over one's life and future" (Grice 93). Tan insinuates two variations of memory in the text -- the "autobiographical memory" of Precious Auntie and LuLing and the "posthumous commemoration" of Precious Auntie by posterity, LuLing and Ruth (Assmann 19). Precious Auntie preserves her identity and subjectivity through the generations by patterning a culture out of memory. She lives in the memory of her daughter, LuLing and grand daughter, Ruth. LuLing and Ruth perform the act of resuscitation with the help of memory to keep Precious Auntie as their eternal foremother and take her with them into their progressive present.

Amy Tan situates memory in the psychology of LuLing's life, examining how the reconstructions of events over time, space and place mould and inform her individuality and experience. From LuLing's point of view, memory becomes a conglomeration that results from her existence in China. Her memory is both individual and collective in this sense that it involves her individual life experiences in the orphanage and her various shared group

experiences while in the Liu family. As Strobel in *Coming Full Circle* opines, "To reclaim memory at the personal level is to engage in the process of creating a collective memory of a people's history" (Root 73). The construction and configuration of identity becomes significant for LuLing to create a sense of belonging and control in the new host land. The memories of her mother and her life in China assist her in dealing with wistfulness, security, social conflict and cultural displacement. The memories provide her "a sense of continuity to feel whole, which can be summarized as "who I am"" (Espin 30). LuLing's memoir details the customs and practices of China while unravelling the relationship between herself and Precious Auntie. LuLing adopts the pattern of episodic memory which includes two significant components like "temporal tagging" and "autonoetic knowing" (227). LuLing experiences "temporal tagging" or "mental time travel" as she encounters all the past events at a particular place and time in the past. She also endures "autonoetic knowing" which suggests her ability of self-knowing consciousness that negotiates her sentience on her existence and individuality in subjective time ranging from the past through the present to the future.

LuLing performs the role of a cultural envoi who describes her motherland's traditional art forms, ceremonies, superstitions, joint family structures and outlooks. The depiction of her early life in China in the memoir thus can be read as a cultural artefact which is temporally and spatially distanced from the present. By scripting the memoir, LuLing desires

to bring a transformation in her identity of that of a demoted stranger in America to one with a renowned ethnicity and heredity. LuLing and Precious Auntie "turn to the past as a means of effecting change in the present, not for reasons of nostalgia" (Agnew 8). She manages to create a sense of uniqueness and superiority through the description of an exceptional family history from the feminist perspective. Writing down memories helps LuLing to "construct a sense of the past" and reinforce social bonding, learning and the memories themselves" (Espin 42). Although aware of the hegemony of the patriarchal Chinese culture, LuLing utilizes the details of Chinese history to fix her personal and cultural identities. LuLing believes that myths and legends related to the motherland can maintain the family genealogy in a secure manner. Her "memories and personal accounts remain a unique, and often the only, way to access migrant experience, sensitivities and identities" (253). Choice of the maternal genealogy itself as the mainstream of her past life history is indicative of the subversion of the patriarchal powers. The genesis of her ancestral history thus commences with the introduction of the nameless, mute female figure, Precious Auntie.

Counting, as a memory device, has an innate connection that links the three women to their ancestral land. LuLing deploys the stratagem of counting which she teaches Ruth to keep an order of her memory. Finger counting enables Ruth to keep track of her life's events. LuLing count fingers "in the Chinese style" through which she "never forgot a thing, especially lies,

betrayals, and all the bad deeds Ruth had done since she was born" (*BSD* 20). The grandmother, Precious Auntie's muteness and subsequent hand communication is strangely linked to the grand daughter, Ruth in America. Ruth's weekly silence persuades her to conduct a hand communication with her family and friends. From a displaced milieu and removed reminiscences, Ruth thus radically sharpens her vision of China through her mother's memories that ultimately asserts her subject position in America.

The Bonesetter's Daughter inscribes how the charting of the individually experienced traumatic memories mirrors and fortifies the lives of three women. The female textual voices include the pictorial extensive elucidation of the life of Precious Auntie and LuLing in China. As these women verbalize their experiences of sufferings, they transform their travails into logical and coherent narratives that form the impermeable ancestral document of China. The inter-textual conversations between the mother and the daughter in LuLing's memoir function as a testimony to the second generation daughter, Ruth. Ruth walking back to her matrilineal community towards the end of the novel and her refreshed insight about her demented mother, LuLing, heightens the vicarious process which bestows to the sense of female subjectivity. The three women experience trauma in three variations as they locate themselves in diverse locations of China, Hong Kong and San Francisco. Tan's representation of the grandmother, Precious Auntie, as "unusual"…. "Self-educated, forthright, quite a rebel for her time" announces the writer's spirit

in the liberation of women from the fringes of patriarchy (278). She is presented as tough and assertive who surpasses the male authority in traditional medicinal practices like bone setting and healing. As a female victim of abuse, she treats her traumatic memories as a kind of mechanism that regains her balanced sense of identity and agency in the society.

In orphanage, LuLing's decision to become a feminist figure and challenge the anathemas is the result of her awareness of her mother's traumatic and oppressive life in China. Her childhood life marked by traditional art forms and warm family life stands a contrast to her latter life in an orphanage. LuLing tries to survive the new situation by reconnecting and recollecting her past life with her mother: "I was the daughter of Precious Auntie, a woman who also could not control her desires, who then gave birth to me" (279). LuLing's affair with Kai Jing and Precious Auntie's bold act with Hu Sen shatters the codes of patriarchy. Here both mother and daughter emerge as agents that encompass the praxis of communal modification. LuLings' toughest life experiences in the orphanage at the backdrop of Sino-Japanese war exert her to consider the border-crossing as liberating.

Tan demonstrates China's stormy history -- the tragic, tumultuous and impossible life in China -- that persuades the Chinese mothers to emigrate from their venerable native land. As a part of constructing her identity and self, she includes the atrocities of the Sino-Japanese war and her lone survival in the orphanage away from her family. China is pictorially represented for the

second generation daughter, Ruth by LuLing who desires to find justification by portraying the hostile living conditions in China that coerce dreams of relocation to America. Tan makes LuLing recount the experiences of visualizing Chinese citizens confined within the Japanese war camps and brutalized beyond extremes. The anarchic political situation of China gets worse as "the Japanese were doing unspeakable acts with innocent girls, some as young as eleven or twelve. That was what had happened in Tientsin, Tungchow, and Nanking. "Those girls they didn't kill afterward tried to kill themselves.…" (309). The absolute dismay of China is suggested by the wartime bedlam of grenades, ailment, mutilated body parts and dead spouses. Alarming physical decay permeates the ambience of China in the novel. Precious Auntie's scars that shudders the sight of even blind beggars, LuLing's description of the horrifying image of the Beggar Lane girl with two sunken puckers instead of eyes, and her encounter of one eyed Fu Nan indicate the inevitable link between deformity and China. Beyond functioning as a mere victim authorizing the civil experiences of war, LuLing acts as an agent who assures the protection of a group of students in the orphanage. Registering the extremities of war and related personal tragedies in the memoir, LuLing's desires to revisit her motherland to pacify her mother's ghost, accomplish remaining onuses, and brace ties with her ancestral land.

The war forms a significant incident in the history of China that necessitates the voyage of LuLing to America. LuLing's voyage across China

to America, the 'Christian heaven,' without companionship pinpoints and charts her strong self and agency. In America, LuLing works as a "busybody watcher of kindergartners" and as a bilingual calligrapher to support herself and her daughter Ruth (77). As a caretaker and breadwinner, LuLing becomes the dominant decision maker and cultural transmitter. She attempts to teach Ruth the dynamics of writing Chinese calligraphy by trying to stuff the "Chinese logic into her resistant brain" (159). China continues to provide cultural memory for the first generation immigrant, LuLing and also becomes the foundation for the propagation of ethnic culture to the Chinese American daughter, Ruth. Ruth metaphorically travels to China with the aim of improving the intergenerational bonds and she attempts to interpret the life experiences of her mother in the milieu of the Sino-Japanese war, the Taiping Rebellion and the Kuomintang-Communist Civil War.

The act of memorizing is closely linked with the culture of forgetting in the identity formation of the three women. According to Lingchei Letty Chen, "Forgetting, like remembering, is an essential part in reconstructing one's identity after a traumatic experience" (141). Ruth hints at LuLing's capacity to deliberately forget "the sad parts" from her "memory web" (401). The wilful erasure of certain memories points to her struggle in portraying her strong subjective sense of self and attitude. LuLing's diasporic identity is "not about struggling with issues of authenticity and hybridity but about the toil between remembering and forgetting" (7). Her memoir is her effort to re-experience

the past to part with it. Precious Auntie also suggests the vitality of the selective memory where she points out that "past… [is] what we choose to remember" (*BSD* 403). The mothers attempt at Loewald's concept of "repetition as re-creation" through which they generate new meanings out of something old. They utilize past memories as a prototype that gets "creatively transformed in the act of repetition, neither to be imitated or reproduced… nor to be eliminated" (Juhasz 111). Ruth acts as the interpreter of maternal texts while handling the maternal memories to create a discourse that finally opens into her own. Thus the mother's ability to develop subjectivity through writing memoir helps the daughter to develop creativity as well.

Another mode of transferring cultural memories across geo cultural boundaries happens through the transmission of cultural codes by mothers in the form of souvenirs to the daughters. Precious Auntie vindicates her life's struggle through the delivery of her memoir wrapped in a blue cloth. The memoir as a gift "signify a transfer or penetration of personal substance to another" (Yang 195). The patriarchal silencing persuades precious Auntie to text her hidden past. The concealment of the oracle bone and her photograph inside the blue cloth with the memoir reminds her ardent desire to share her cultural legacy to her daughter. The oracle bone, "the cultural repertoire of strategic act" is suggestive of permanent healing that enables a spiritual connection and symbolic atonement amid Precious Auntie and LuLing (109). The photograph taken before her personal tragedies "is an object of complex

emotional and cultural meaning, an artifact used to conjure memory, nostalgia, and contemplation" [which] "plays an important function in the relationship of personal memory, cultural memory, and history precisely because of the ways in which images can move from one realm to the next" (Hirsch, *The Familial Gaze* 178). These legacies explain the relevance of her mother's affection which resonates in LuLing's rumination: "I held the picture up to the light….The more I looked, however, the more she became familiar. And then I realized: Her face, her hope, her knowledge, her sadness -- they were mine. Then I cried and cried, glutting my heart with joy and self-pity (*BSD* 270-271). LuLing realizes the picture as "an emanation of the referent…. A sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to [her] gaze: light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium…." (Barthes 80-81)

Ruth's mother, LuLing engraves her memoir along with the narrative of her mother, Precious Auntie. Tan projects the trajectory of the female life-writings as a mutual exchange between the grandmother, mother and daughter which echoes empathy, forgiveness and affection. The memoir adopts a circular structure that ultimately brings the female figures on the same platform where they erase the cultural dualities. The memoirs carve out a separate social space for the mothers where their life portrayal attempts to transcend the patriarchal oppression to strengthen the emotional state of Ruth. The mothers indirectly convey to their daughters radical insights and outlooks through the portrayal of their struggles. Tan focuses to connect the daughter's

future with the maternal past through textual communication. Here the mothers and daughters are the equal participants in coding and decoding the written records that allows the daughters to filter choices from the mothers' past mistakes. As Ruth gazes at her grandmother's photograph, she develops a poised sense of ethnicity that guarantees her the vigour to resist the American racism. The old photograph of the high collared woman thus establishes an unbreakable connection across generations. In Hirsch's opinion,

> Photographs in their enduring "umbilical" connection to life are precisely the medium connecting first and second generation remembrance, memory and post memory. They are the leftovers, the fragmentary sources and building blocks, shot through with holes, of the work of post memory. They affirm the past's existence and, in their two-dimensionality, they signal its unbridgeable distance. (*Family Frames* 23)

The visual image devises alternative representations of ethnicity to foster cultural authentication essential for the survival of the second generation daughter, Ruth. The photograph of Precious Auntie, through its distinctive aesthetic possibilities, models a distinct mode of accessibility which enables Ruth to analyse it overcoming linguistic incompetence. The old towel with fuchsia flowers which Ruth discovers from LuLing's flat takes her back to the irrevocable past. Objects like this were "suffused with a life and a past. They had a history, a personality, a connection to other memories" (*BSD* 152).

Through the nexus of these old memories, the three women fix in their minds a psychological image of their nebulous ethnic affinity.

The text foregrounds the written narratives as profoundly mediated and challenged as the grandmother, mother and the daughter go through probable impulses of personal memories. First, LuLing's dementia threats a challenge to her genuine transmission of her life story as she writes "the same sentences over and over, saying that she was worried that she was already forgetting too many things" (*BSD* 290). Here, Tan discusses how the phenomenon of dementia highlights and expresses "the changing role of cultural memory in a uniformed culture of consumption, the blurring boundaries between the real and the imaginary in a mediatised society, and the transformation of generational authority in a culture where youthfulness is idealised" (Stene-Johansen and Tygstrup 99). Ruth's difficulty in dealing with her demented mother -- that challenges the rest of her life -- is a tussle to cope with a crucial anecdotal past that ultimately provides her cultural integration and assists her in the recuperation of cultural memory. The early onset of dementia accelerates LuLing to create a record of her personal memories of her family history in China during the Second World War. The Chinese language provides her with genuine and precise expression and LuLing desires Ruth to read her Chinese manuscript with paramount attention. Here, mother tongue "serves a strong function as a retrieval cue when eliciting memories for past life experiences.…" (Altarriba 316). Tan transforms LuLing's dementia

as a strait that persuades Ruth to cross over the boundary of her hybrid identity as she recognizes the relevance of the manuscript and its subsequent translation. LuLing's manuscript evolves into a hypnotizing narrative melding the bygone, existential and allegorical world of China. For LuLing, the recording of her life is a sort of therapy that helps her in coordinating the vital moments of her life and assists her in reliving the life along with her mother, Precious Auntie. The novel investigates "how the disease initiates a cultural self-reflexion, an examination of the resources available to our civilization for dealing with this alien experience, and finally an examination of what kind of image of us appears in the distorting mirror of the disease" (Stene-Johansen and Tygstrup 103). Second, Ruth's struggle to interpret her mother's Chinese memoir through the assistance of a mediator, Mr. Tang, is another act of intermediation. Third, Precious Auntie's story is presented as a third person narrative by LuLing which raises the possibilities of possible subjective manipulation. However, writing, foregrounded as an empowering tool, probes, shapes and refines the identities of three women.

Maternal writing functions as a positive gesture of recognition. Both the mothers' memoirs assist them in bringing their maternal subjectivity into language by ascertaining a textual connexion between them. Succumbing to hostility, seclusion, and frustration, Precious Auntie expresses her defiance through suicide. Here the act of suicide, through violent means of swallowing hot resin, stands for the "extension of reducing difference" (Benjamin,

Shadow of the Other 86). The patriarchal exorcism of the Chinese society erases the name and identity of Precious Auntie who involuntarily screens her maternal identity. Her attempts to discover her arrested voice and retaliate against the contradictions imposed by the Chinese patriarchy assure her a distinct position. Dissimilar to the clichéd and victimized Asian women, Precious Auntie represents a "woman warrior" skilled at folk-healing and a practitioner of traditional bone setting who "could write the names of every flower, seed and bush, as well as say their medicinal uses" (*BSD* 205). The act of bone- healing demonstrates Precious Auntie's "strategic retrieval and repossession of [her] agency in dealing with the dominant patriarchal culture" (O'Reilly, *From Motherhood To Mothering* 91). Her early attempt of suicide by swallowing hot resin, in consequence of losing her father and husband on her wedding day, thoroughly mutilates her. The consciousness of the single mother status persuades Precious Auntie to lead a trying life with disfigured face and inferior position. The conventional society least permits a single mother and child to thrive alone together without a male presence announces the demeaned position of this respectable woman from an acceptable traditional family. Precious Auntie is reconstructed as a simulated absence and her muteness, disfigurement and demoted social position in the family augment her sense of oppression by the feudal China.

The daughters' failure in the timely reflection of maternal memoirs results in the prolonged unsettled interpersonal relationship amid the mothers

and daughters. LuLing's initial hesitancy in reading the maternal memoir is suggestive of the anxiety she feels about revelations and alterations. LuLing's life in China, ignorant of her parentage, as the daughter of the Mother of the Liu clan family under the nurture of her biological mother, Precious Auntie, traverses along multiple stages of resistance, struggle and transformation. Her relationship with Precious Auntie can be likened with the first three subtitles of Part two of the novel. "Heart" reveals the intense bond between the two where LuLing equates the meaning of the words "Precious Auntie" with "Ma." The next title "Change" depicts the shift in the attitude of LuLing who starts considering Precious Auntie as a mere nurse maid with crazy thoughts. "Ghost" reveals the late realization of the daughter who recognizes her real mother. LuLing's constant attempts to construct a space for her own and Precious Auntie's persistent interference result in the estrangement between the two. In the case of LuLing, like any other adolescent daughter, anger becomes the primary vehicle that enables her to pull away from her mother. Her anger is directed against Precious Auntie's involvement and hindrance at the major decisions of her life. The inferior status of Precious Auntie as the nursemaid urges LuLing to ruminate thus, "But the bigger I grew, the more she shrank in importance. The smarter I thought I had become, the more I was able to reason that Precious Auntie was only a servant, a woman who held no great position in our household, a person no one liked" (*BSD* 205). LuLing betrays precious Auntie as she pauses listening to her and acting as her sole

agency of communication with the society that subdues and silences her: "Precious Auntie tugged my sleeve. I ignored her. Lately I had done this a few times, and it infuriated Precious Auntie. Since she could not speak and Mother could not read, when I refused to talk for her, she was left wordless, powerless" (216). The disloyalty of this daughter can be paralleled to Ruth's condemnation of LuLing even in a different geographical location.

Amy Tan positions the second generation daughter Ruth in the geographical space of America where in she experiences the emotional dilemma caused by her maternal and host culture. Ruth encounters the very first and significant dilemma of deciphering LuLing's memoir that pronounces the problematic relationship between herself and her mother. The inability to interpret her mother's memoir without the aid of an outside negotiator depicts her incompetence to comprehend the language and primacy of her mother's experiences. It even announces her apparent acclimatization into the cultural praxes of America. The disharmony with the mother extends the separation to adolescence and later into adulthood. The maternal omnipotence and overprotection posed by LuLing exhausts Ruth's individuality and confidence.

LuLing desires to raise a Chinese daughter in the American land, but disregards the fact that Ruth lives in a distinct historical and national context. LuLing forbids Ruth from enjoying American dishes like beef, ham burger and chocolate milk and teenage crushes on movies, Marlboro cigarettes and cosmetics. The American culture imposes in Ruth the inherent belief that a

separate individuality and femininity is possible only through the 'dichotomization' of her mother which otherwise would deny her sense of individuality. Ruth strives to "repudiate the maternal in order to discover her own femininity" (Walters 228). As LuLing strives to create a Chinese space within the American apartment, Ruth attempts for a psychological liberation from her mother. Even if LuLing's dislocation is self-initiated, her experience of displacement, of having to handle multiple and strange frontiers, margins and contexts, gets encrypted in future generations. Ruth and LuLing position themselves in such a way that they successfully transcend the geographical and cultural schisms.

Amy Tan filters the relationship of Ruth and LuLing through an intricate structure of mediating relationships which include the spiritual presence of Ruth's grandmother Precious Auntie, Ruth's partner Art and his two daughters, Dory and Sofia, LuLing's sister Gao Ling, Mr. Tang, translator of LuLing's memoir and Ruth's best friend, Wendy. All these characters directly and indirectly facilitate Ruth's "access to the mother, the figure behind the closed door" (Hirsch, *The Mother-Daughter Plot* 149). As several life events with the Americans create moments of epiphany in Ruth's life, she gains recognition of her 'other' position during the Full Moon Festival dinner. The dinner splits the entire group into Chinese and non-Chinese sections. When Ruth, LuLing and their relatives together forms the Chinese section, Art, Miriam, Art's parents and his children assemble into the non-Chinese section.

The repulsion and disgust shown over the Chinese dishes by Art's family and his ex-wife, Miriam prompts Ruth to weigh her status and relationship with the Kamen family. Within the American apartment, Ruth thus occupies the position of an "outsider-within" thereby encountering all the intrinsic struggles to assimilate and acculturate within the American social policy by acclimatizing, reclaiming and appropriating her identity (Collins 12). Ruth experiences the psychical and physical subservience rendered by racism that leads to frustration and emptiness. The peripheral position of Ruth provides her the psychic state of an outsider while sharing the solid space and boundaries of America. The constant struggle between her 'ontic' self (how she perceives herself) and her 'social' self (how others perceive her) is evident from the passage that punctuates Ruth's thoughts:

> Ruth had sensed that the Kamens hoped she was only a brief interlude in Art's life. They never knew how to introduce her. "This is Art's uh, Ruth," They'd say…. Miriam, on the other hand, was now and forever the mother of the Kamens' granddaughters… [they] had given her the family sterling, china, and the mezuzah kissed by five generations of Kamens since the days they lived in Ukraine. (*BSD* 94)

Maternal speech is almost absent in the novel and the two mother-daughter pairs never succeed in addressing each other effectively. LuLing fails to communicate to Ruth and the pattern of the missed communication results

in their troubled relationship. LuLing suffers from a "boundary confusion" and "narcissistic over identification" with Ruth, whom she identifies as herself and hopes to hold in infantile dependence forever (Lieberman 112). The boundary confusion refers to the failure to distinguish the psychological uniqueness of individuals or a perplexity of their interpersonal roles. LuLing disregards the fact that "In order to realize the full possibilities of her individual life… the middle aged mother must not only separate from her adolescent daughter, she must also complete her separation from her aging mother. It is, after all, only as mothers and daughters *grow* apart, that each becomes a full woman" (Walters 193). Ruth's "autonomous interests and opinions may represent a dangerous step towards separation-individuation" (Kieffer 11).

The Bonesetter's Daughter makes extensive use of literary devices and techniques in the text to demonstrate the pulsations in the mother-daughter relationship. Tan employs the bone imagery to refine the intergenerational relationship between the mothers and the daughters in the text. The recurrent images of dragon bones and oracle bones in the novel interlock multiple spheres of experience that cover physical and spiritual healing, writing and mystical intuition, ancestry and family tradition. As the bones convey the brokenness in the relationships, they also propose the possibility of emotional healing. The Bonesetter's ghost approaches his daughter, Precious Auntie, in her dream to inform her about the curses befell upon their entire family as a result of stealing the ancestral bones from the Monkey's Jaw: The bones... are

from our own clan, the ancestor who was crushed in the Monkey's Jaw. And because we stole them, he's cursed us…. "Return the bones. Until they're reunited with the rest of his body, he'll continue to plague us" (*BSD* 202).

The significance of reuniting the misplaced bones of the ancestral man thus becomes essential for the family to attain salvation. Precious Auntie's promise to return the oracle bone "signals her readiness to assume her rightful position as a healer of her people through the reclamation of her role as a Native woman…." (O'Reilly, *From Motherhood to Mothering* 99). The act of replacing the ancestral bones back to the cave by Precious Auntie indicates her attempt of the reclamation of her ancestral and national history. She emerges as the pointer and conserver of a dynamic past of ethnic productivity. LuLing's multiple visits to the ancestral cave Monkey's Jaw along with Precious Auntie in search of bones redesigns her maternal roots and reinforces her traditional beliefs. The frequent visits to the cave reflect their intuitive desire to recoup their shattered family. Ruth, though in a distant space and time, through the combination of compassion, affection and writing, recognizes the bones of her grandmother and mother within her. Two bone-related episodes that occur in Ruth's early life paves the way for the formation of her identity. Ruth's rejection of her relationship with LuLing and her consequent broken arm after a fall from the slide at the playground paves the way for her better comprehension of her mother's affection towards her. Here her broken arm and her subsequent use of the sand tray messages, to

connect with her ancestors, navigate time and space that offers her ultimate liberation from ghost writing.

At the end of the narrative, Ruth begins to write her own book with the divine inspiration of her mother and grandmother. In America, she realizes her permanent influence of her grandmother and mother who "shaped her life, who are in her bones. . . . [Their] warnings were passed down, not simply to scare her, but to force her to avoid their footsteps, to hope for something better. They wanted her to get rid of the curses" (*BSD* 352). Another incident of LuLing getting severely injured falling out of the window, after reading Ruth's offensive remarks about her from her diary, amends Ruth's mental setup that makes her write in her diary thus: "I am sorry. Sometimes I just wish you would say you're sorry too" (166). Bones thus serve as the physiological images that impart the intricate process of amalgamating Ruth's ethnic roots into her American bicultural existence.

Mr. Tang, the translator of LuLing's Chinese memoir, takes the functional role of an arbitrator who unearths the hidden familial identity of the three women. Other than decoding the memoir for Ruth, his role in spotting the oracle bone in the museum, ascertains the lost family name of Precious Auntie:

> Ruth saw an ivory-coloured spade like object, cracked with lines and blackened with holes. Was it a board for an ancient game of go? A cooking implement? Next to it was a smaller object, light

> brown and oval, with a lip around it and writing instead of holes. At once she knew, but before she could speak, her mother gave the answer in Chinese: "Oracle bone." (392-393)

Museum, here, functions as "a bridge from past to present and memory [becomes] the strong base of this bridge" (Wu 30). LuLing's and Ruth's discovery of Precious Auntie's birth name enunciates the significance of bones in their lives. The real name of Precious Auntie, Gu Liu Xin, unearths her supressed character and identity. The English meaning of the Chinese name Liu Xin is 'remain true.' Precious Auntie's life devoted to her daughter, LuLing, explains the significance of her name. Referring to the family name, "Gu", Gaoling explains to Ruth:

> "*Gu*" as in'gorge.' It's a different *gu*. It sounds the same as the bone *gu*, but it's written a different way. The third-tone *gu* can mean many things: 'old,' 'gorge,' 'bone,' also 'thigh,' 'blind,' 'grain,' 'merchant,' lots of things. And the way 'bone' is written can also stand for 'character.' That's why we use that expression 'It's in your bones.' It means, 'That's your character.'" (*BSD* 398)

The title *The Bonesetter's Daughter* hints at the grandmother, Gu Liu Xin, the mother and daughter, LuLing and Ruth respectively. They alleviate the intimidating conditions of their family by improving therapeutic feelings towards one another. In quintessence, all the three women are bonesetters who mend the broken bones that are the mind, body and spirit of each other with

the tethers and therapeutic herbs of interaction across cultures. As a curative art form, Chinese bone-setting signals the possibility of congregating and reordering the maternal past that enable Ruth to define her individuality. The bones instigate the mothers to challenge the Confusianist patriarchal limits that confine them as obedient daughters within the Chinese social scenario. The exclusivity of bone setting implies a customary practice that suggests permanent perseverance and tenacity of Chinese ancestral heritage Ruth's realization of the presence of her maternal figures "in her bones" solidifies her Chinese identity within the racial spectrum of America (402). Through a confluence of mutual forgiveness, LuLing and Ruth, polish their identities in the new land with strengthened ethnic roots. Supplementing the imagery of bones assists Tan in modifying the past and refashioning the future of the women protagonists of the novel.

White orchids are powerful female signifiers that represent admiration and reticence, virtuousness and integrity, and classiness and loveliness of Ruth. Similarity can be traced in the case of orchids and Ruth that both of them "thrived on neglect" (157). The transformation of Ruth towards the end of the novel is likened to a new variety of orchids, "dendrobium orchid known as *cuthbertsonii* [that] blooms nearly year-round, nonstop… and can take daily watering" at Mr. Patel's assisted living centre, Mira Mar Manor (361). She develops an upright relationship with Art and his daughters who start realizing Ruth's significance in their lives. Her choice of ghost writing indicates her

selfless attitude even though it fails to offer a comfortable space for her. Writing inspirational self-help books for her clients creates a sort of emptiness in her mind as her vocation provides her less admiration from her family and friends.

The ghost-writing denies Ruth the opportunity to provide her any agency as she merely decodes other people's thoughts. The categories of "Self-Help, Wellness, Inspirational, New Age" books that Ruth revises indicate her interests in topics such as "communication problems, behavioural patterns, emotional problems, mind-body connections, and spiritual awakening" (42- 43). The selection of books suggest her proclivity in interpreting the meaning of life and her ultimate struggle to unravel the problematic relationship with her mother, LuLing and her partner, Art. The book-doctoring, however, provides her the opportunity to avoid her own life story. She hesitates to bring in any kind of revision of her past life, as, in her opinion, "Writing what you wished was the most dangerous form of wishful thinking" (31). Ruth thrives for some sort of recognition that allows herself "to realize (her) agency and authorship in a tangible way" (Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love* 12). The absence of recognition frustrates her and she yearns for appreciation and respect from people around her:

> And when the books were published, Ruth had to sit back quietly at parties while the clients took the credit for being brilliant. She often claimed she did not need to feel satisfied, but that was not

> exactly true. She wanted some recognition, and not like the kind she had received two weeks before, at the party for her mother's seventy-seventh birthday (*BSD* 43).

Just like the delicacy and tenderness of the orchids, Ruth's transparency and ordinariness allows her to lead a hushed life under the nurture of her Chinese parent, LuLing. Ruth's emotional disparity results from her troubled relationship with her culturally displaced mother, LuLing who fails to provide psychological reassurance to Ruth. Ruth's psychic and physical maturation with the Chinese mother at the backdrop of America places her in the 'in-between' territory marked by the cultural complexity and generational variants. The constant suicidal threats of LuLing immobilize Ruth and make her submissive rather than develop tension within the family. Ruth's submission is thus motivated from the "fear of separation and abandonment" that restrains her ability to express her desire and agency (Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love* 79). Another reason behind Ruth's perfunctory submission is LuLing's single mother status and her adversities in raising a daughter alone. Here Ruth's relationship to LuLing, "emphasizing merging and continuity at the expense of individuality and independence, provides fertile ground for submission" (78-79).

The persistence on strict filial deference in the cultural scenario of America puzzles and defies Ruth's individuality and discerning capacity. Identification with the Chinese mother, Ruth believes, sacrifices the American

identity she is in the throes of cultivating. Ruth, in her initial years of life, rejects her mother's influence only to realize later that maternal rejection is a kind of self-rejection. Her discord with LuLing is evident from her journal entry that marks her dissonance with her mother's feverish attitudes and morbid outlooks: "I hate her! She's a worst mother a person could have. She doesn't love me. She doesn't listen to me. She doesn't understand anything about me. All she does is pick on me, get mad, and make me feel worse" (*BSD* 159).

Orchid flowers for LuLing suggest despondency as flowers remind her of writing banners for funeral wreaths and the unexpected death of kinfolk such as Precious Auntie, Kai Jing, Miss Towler, and Miss Grutoff. Like the enduring nature of orchids, LuLing survives many demanding situations in her life without the assistance of others. LuLing's process of self-development is influenced by various causes like the death of her mother and the subsequent realization of her real parentage, unaccepted admission to the orphanage, the interference of many people, the Sino-Japanese war and related troubles and her final departure to the United States. Her quest for authentic selfhood takes a different avenue as she takes course of her actions by mapping her own possibilities and seeking her own fortunes. While her option of leaving her motherland can be interpreted as an escape, the narrative succeeds in presenting her border crossing as an alternate path of empowerment and emancipation.

LuLing born a Fire dragon and Ruth, a Water dragon imply the variations in their temperament that localizes them in separate rostrums. LuLing's authoritarian maternal behaviour leads to Ruth's denunciation of her ancestral lineage: "I'm an American," Ruth shouted. "I have a right to privacy, to pursue my own happiness, not yours!" (158). Ruth's recurrent attempts to amalgamate into the American mainstream culture thrust her to categorize LuLing as a racial other. She manages to leave the maternal space and embarks on a journey towards "selfhood, initiated and exacerbated by a lack of self and spiritual consciousness and connectedness" (Alexander 22). The Black Pearl Necklace gifted by Ruth to LuLing who again returns it back to Ruth assumes great significance as it brings out the strained relationship between the two. The fake pearls signify Ruth's guilt and falseness in her relationship with LuLing.

Ruth yearns to enjoy similar freedom relished by her American schoolmates in their life and in the matter of choices they make. LuLing's stringent refusal of the American ways makes Ruth a rebel. Ruth strives to establish herself in the American scenario, though she is constantly reminded of her Chinese lineage. Amidst all exclusionary practices that America subjects her to, Ruth sustains the loyal idea of considering America as her designated home. As Ruth strives to identify with the dominant culture instead of associating herself with the matrilineal heritage her mother exemplifies, she facsimiles the dynamics of "Electra complex on a cultural level" thus

becoming a "Cultural Electra" (Shultermandl 46). The "discharge of ethnicity" by Ruth distances her from the Chinese heritage which persuades her to consider LuLing as a cultural 'other' (Bloom 120). The cultural distinction from the mother is considered significant by the daughter than the preservation of the maternal heritage. Ruth's story is not just that of a hybrid individual's tussle to survive in America, but a struggle to achieve the paradigm of equality by subduing the barricades imposed by racism. Even while clinging to the American social setup Ruth encounters racial bias at several stages of her life. Her school friends, ridicule her for her mother's faulty English: "What's that gobbledy-gook-gook she's saying?" (*BSD* 69) LuLing's incompetent English tongue pushes Ruth to make the stern declaration to her American friends: "She's not my mother!"… I don't know who she is!" (77). Ruth's "surpassing the mother" points to her wilful extermination of maternal machinations (Walters 156). As Ruth denounces her mother, she actually indirectly renounces the Chinese race. Her frantic deeds to turn less traditional and her orientalist outlook towards her mother stand in strong opposition to her mother's struggle for the continuity of the cultural heritages. The more LuLing protests against Ruth's severance, the more the daughter wants to detach herself from the authoritarian, Chinese mother, LuLing.

Amy Tan's inclusion of another symbol, vapours, outlines Ruth's relationship with Art and his family. Art opines that relationships should be like vapours -- feeble and formidable, insipid and invigorating at the same

time. Ruth's relationship with Art alienates her from her ethnic and maternal roots. Ruth positions her desires in the second place that causes Art and his children to take her for granted. Art's and his daughters' American mode of unconventionality makes them inured to Ruth's inner feelings. Ruth realizes her own vulnerability and loneliness at the moment when Art asks her, "What are you going to do?" with the demented LuLing (*BSD* 112). The 'you' instead of 'we' in Art's question disturbs her entire being as she feels lonesome as a human being. His suggestion to leave her mother under the custody of a caretaker puzzles her. Art's callousness toward LuLing's dementia lands Ruth in a state of jeopardy as she struggles to make sense of Chinese and American ways of filial responsibility.

Most of the immigrant literatures foreground the central role played by food in the formation of ethnic identity through festive feasts and special banquets that binds people together. As in other novels, here also Tan makes appropriate use of cuisines as a relevant narrative strategy. In *The Bonesetter's Daughter* the typical varieties of Chinese dishes move "beyond its nutritional properties to become a fundamental signifier of the [immigrants'] identity" (Xu 231). For Ruth, food becomes a racial conduit linking her with the maternal community which even surfaces as a dynamic literal modality and a multivalent symbol enunciating her sense of ethnic and national identity. The celebration of the togetherness of Young family by means of a Chinese dinner serves as an allegory for the distinctively cultural way of being. Ruth's

arrangement of her mother's favourite menu that include the "sweetly glazed phoenix-tail fish, vegetarian chicken made out of wrinkly tissues of tofu, and jelly fish […] seasoned with sesame oil and sprinkled with diced green onions" paves the way for her racial and ethnic identification with her mother (*BSD* 98). The inclusion of fish items and sweet, pale and delicate dishes suggest femininity as these cuisines belong to the fungible category of the feminine. The "feminine and maternal sensibility," projected through the choice of feminine dishes, present in the narrative "is anchored in the embracing of enjoyment of the maternal" (Xu 28). Chinese dishes become "both intellectual and emotional anchor" which permits Ruth to spiritually travel to her geographically and temporally remote motherland that provides "her sense of rootedness in the United States" (Mannur 27). For voluntary immigrants like, LuLing and GaoLing, Chinese multi-coloured cuisines like "Tofu with pickled greens, Sea cucumbers […] And glutinous rice cakes" (*BSD* 99) function "as an index to a material history of survival, adaption, ingenuity and hybridization -- a triumphant history of overcoming adversities" (Xu 8). For them, "culinary culture" is linked to ""feelings" that take on monolithic and mythological proportions" (Mannur 32). For Art and his family, the dinner table in the American restaurant with the Chinese dishes become a "heterotopia" that indicates "a site of crisis and deviation" in a system of hierarchically controlled social space (Xu 63). Condemnation of Chinese dishes by her American family and friends thus aggravate Ruth's psychic conflict and

intensify prevailing tension as it projects the glaring differences in the Chinese and American cultures.

The continued presence of mother and daughter in LuLing's life curtails her sense of personal development. She desires to stay connected to her daughter and dead mother. The violent separation from Precious Auntie has left deep scars in the mind of LuLing and she considers Ruth as a mediator to convey her mental thoughts to her mother. Here Ruth develops the double identity of a mother and a daughter. Taking the position of her dead grandmother, Precious Auntie, Ruth visualizes her mother through the maternal lens. Ruth regains a sense of confidence, self-sufficiency and esteem as she becomes "her mother's child, and mother to the child her mother had become" (*BSD* 346). She develops the potential of "vicarious introspection" which enables her to comprehend her mother's feelings from an empathetic point of view (Mitchell et al 135). As Ruth moves from Art's flat to her mother's apartment, she experiences a feminine, maternal connection free from male intervention. The flat becomes a haven for maternal bonding, offering LuLing and Ruth a prospect to establish their feminine and ethnic space. LuLing's apartment thus transforms into an "intersubjective space" that provides Ruth with the "freedom to imagine, discover and create" (Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love* 126). It even becomes the "space designated" [and] "designed… to teach, form and shape" Ruth to enact [her] imperial function of (re)constructing the homeland (Weber-F`eve xxi). Through the creation of a

gender space, Tan idealizes the mother-daughter relationship as the "dyadic space of real presence and true mutual recognition" excluding conflict, hostility and vexation (Loeffelholz 87). The restored relationship with the mother also creates reverberations in Ruth's relationship with Art and his children. As Ruth fosters an "intersubjective relationship with her mother," she enters into a constructive relationship with Art (Irigaray and Greene 211). The domestic space in the novel thus "become[s] politically and socially charged transnational spaces of contention on which hybrid seeing and speaking subjects from multiple perspectives descend in order to transform [it] into new re-hybridized [space] or [position] of female spectatorship and authorship from within" (Weber-F`eve 100).

In *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, Tan enlarges the individual experiences of characters to a collective timeless female one. Assigning voices to mother and grandmother assists in Ruth's self-representation that helps her create Chineseness in America. Providing putative voices to LuLing and Precious Auntie, Ruth attempts to reclaim "a past that has been rendered invisible in her own context and thereby encourage her audience to envisage alternative constructions of [American] Chineseness" (Kuehn et al. 88). Lisa M.S. Dunick, in her article "The Silencing Effect of Canonicity," points out:

> In the conclusion of *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, the image of Ruth using her recognition of Chinese identity by actively engaging in the act of writing emphasizes the importance of the literary tradition in

> Tan's own work…. The production of an *écriture féminine* -- of women writing women and of women writing herself -- becomes repeated and amplified through the written autobiographies of Precious Auntie, LuLing, and eventually Ruth by means of the writings of another American daughter, Tan herself. (179)

For Tan, *écriture féminine* offers the peculiar space in which Precious Auntie, LuLing and Ruth "begin the process of creating an ontological autonomy and begin to write a subjectivity which exceeds the phallocentric limits imposed on women" (Weber-F`eve 28).

The life stories act as dominant tools that convey authentic experiences and relationships between the three women while challenging presaged delineations of identity and reality. The comprehension of foremothers provides Ruth with an empowering matrix to establish her agency by sealing the maternal culture in America Ruth's evolution as a writer can be considered as a facet that becomes a site and process for negotiating intergenerational relationship. Writing as a talisman, through the reconstructing ability, interprets, conveys, constructs and modifies the lives of the three fictional women. Ruth through the process of writing attains "containment, holding, recognition" and "affect attunement" which helps her enter into the in-between third space beyond identity (Benjamin, *Shadow of the Other* 27). The epilogue of the novel explains Ruth's meditation on maternal recognition and subjectivity. It further describes Ruth's refreshed insights about her

grandmother and mother:

> These are the women who shaped her life, who are in her bones. They caused her to question whether the order and disorder of her life were due to fate or luck, self-determination or the actions of others. They taught her to worry. But she has also learned that these warnings were passed down, not simply to scare her, but to force her to avoid their footsteps, to hope for something better. They wanted her to get rid of the curses. (*BSD* 402)

Her narcissistic and liberal act of writing enables her to recognize LuLing's and Precious Auntie's separate subjectivity that eventually confirms her own identity. The act of writing, as an inheritance, becomes the source of Ruth's "symbiotic identity and her (re)location in history, home, and socio-political discourse" (Weber-F`eve xxvii). The novelist stresses on the "double action of intersubjectivity" that allows the partakers to delve out their separate subjectivities (Benjamin, *Shadow of the Other* 24). The role of both mothers as godparents are revealed through the legacies they leave behind more than their presence provides during the course of their lives. Ruth's redefined subjectivity permits her to mutually recognize her mother and grandmother.

By writing the ancestral stories in *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, Tan anticipates to teach women about the dissimilar levels and layers of repression that they need to lookout for. Encompassing the recollected, the inherited and the acquired, Ruth through "affective attunement" strives to create her

supressed Chineseness in America (*Benjamin, Shadow of the Other* xviii). Though in a different spatial and cultural context, she realizes the significance of preserving the distinct set of cultural values and practices that eventually defines her individuality and persona. Even though Ruth distinguishes her cultural roots and accepts her maternal heritage, her outlook of the land of United States remains that of a candid approval. The accommodation of LuLing in an Assisted Living Centre, Mira Mar Manor, by Ruth is portrayed in positive terms and the readers are left with the impression that Ruth cannot find a better place to put her aged demented mother. The description of the asylum throws light on its indispensability in the American scenario where even the Asian American individuals are ready to alter their cultural code to get assimilated into the aspects of the host land. Ruth's filial piety as she lodges her demented mother in the Assisted Living Centre remains open-ended and unquestionable in a land like America. Tan takes a challenging stance in this novel by valuing both Chinese and American culture without over privileging both.

Amy Tan conceives the act of writing -- maternal and daughterly writing -- as a gesture towards recognition. In Tan's novel, writing creates a revitalized sense of internality and subjectivity for all the three women characters. Three critical modalities of life writing -- 'performativity,' 'positionality' and 'heteroglossic dialogism' -- envisaged by Stancy Weber-F`eve can be traced in the text to illuminate the journey of three women in substantiating their

subjectivities. The 'performativity' view of the maternal memoirs allows "dynamic sites for the performance of identities constitutive of subjectivity" (Weber-F`eve xxx). The identity of the three women, according to this view, results and reiterates through ethnic norms. The second critical modality, positionality also influences the life narratives of the texual women as they belong to the marginalized group. In the view of positionality, the maternal writers of the text engage in the process of writing "autoethnography" which refers to "the defining of one's subjective ethnicity as mediated through language, history, and ethnographical analysis; in short, ... a kind of 'figural anthropology' of the self" (Couser 93). Adopting this mode of writing, Precious Auntie and LuLing utilize self-reflection and writing to explore their subjective experience and relate their life stories to broader national, radical, and communal repercussions and interpretations. The third modality, 'heteroglossic' dialogism, allows the women characters in the novel to engage in a meaningful "relationship with the 'other(s),'" and participate in an "internal dialogue with the plural aspects of self that constitute the matrix of [marginal] female subjectivity" (Weber-F`eve xxxi). The personal experiences of the three women become the fête of the female strength as Tan offers the female version and vision of life in the novel. Unlike in her other works, the novelist explores the limitless possibilities of writing which is considered as a tool to embark on a personal quest for her distinct Chinese American identity.

Chapter V

Insurgence of Feminine Self in Boudoir: *The Valley of Amazement*

The Valley of Amazement (2013) weaves in the tale of a grandmother-mother-daughter triad within the social history of the Chinese courtesan culture in Shanghaian *fin-de-siècle*. The novel showcases the intricacy of mother-daughter relationship by featuring three generations of women. The complex maternal trinity in the text challenges the notion of woman as 'other' and fosters the subjectivity of feminine experience. The text projects how women generate space for the projection of the complexity of their lives and the construction of gendered selves through the narrative. The independent female narrators of the text engage in "dialogical relationships" with each other and enters into a "dynamic and complex organization of the self" (Kashima et al. 75).

The polyvocal feminist text locates women as not just passive speakers, but active participants in translating their struggles in specific gendered dimensions. The 'polyvocality' in the text communicates the life stories of the American mothers and their half-Chinese daughters. The multiple narrations in the text convey the Chinese courtesan culture interlacing the mother-daughter experiences of the female protagonists. The narrative situates the audibility of the female courtesans over men in the patriarchal society of the early twentieth century China. Tan facilitates a "dialogic, intersubjective narration"

(Leverage and Mancing 237) that involves a "dialogic concordance of unmerged twos or multiples" (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 289). The 'heteroglossia' in the text contributes to the construction of female self by combining the diverse voices in conjunction.

The Valley of Amazement attests authorship in the form of epistolary activity which evolves the symbiotic relationship between mothers and daughters. The text illuminates how the rhetoric of epistolary activity alleviates the effects of geographical separation and psychological schism that separates individuals, especially women. Amy Tan, in the text, proclaims the significance of letters and letter writing in the lives of mothers and daughters. Tan's inclusion of several epistles in the novel emphasizes the hypothetically edifying facets of female bonds. As a trope of legitimacy and intimacy, the letters dispersed in the text becomes an expression of "idealized relational self" (Jolly 84). The act of reading the epistles allows women in the text to reassess and validate various life experiences from a critical point of view. Revolving around the dual concepts of authorship and self-definition, the epistolary activity allows women to disclose female experiences censored by patriarchal history and culture. Functioning as an intermediary that brings the mothers and daughters into direct contact despite their spatial separation, letters nurture relationships and fortify ancestral bonds.

The Valley of Amazement develops through two independent voices of the central characters Lulu (Lucretia Minturn) and Violet. The narration of

deictic maternal-filial relationship at the backdrop of Chinese Courtesan culture truncates the proxemics space between the mothers and daughters in the text. The protagonists' identities as daughters and later as mothers enable them to foreground both the mother-daughter voices in conjunction. Tan's text also showcases a redefinition of female identity by representing mothers and daughters as forcibly separated from each other by external forces. The split-narrative strategy allows women to literally separate and psychologically dissociate their voices. The text witnesses the resurgence of authentic feminine voices that transgress the socio-cultural constraints placed upon them and establish a definite space that can interpret their emotional experience. Tan demonstrates how the mothers and daughters reflect on the processes of recreating family narratives by healing the wounds of the past and bringing women back to the family tree. The juxtaposition of maternal and filial perspectives to produce a shared story replicates the "double voice" that allow these women to negotiate a maze of knowledge to forge identities and capture distinct subjective realities (Hirsch, *The Mother-Daughter Plot* 181).

In *The Valley of Amazement*, Tan explores the intergenerational conflicts between the mothers and daughters that inflect their subjectivity and collective sense of identity from the American Chinese diaspora. Amy Tan highlights the mother-daughter relationship in a different shade in the novel as she places the mother as an American and the daughter as a Chinese American. The conflicted and volatile mothers and daughters in the text struggle to separate

from each other and establish their own identities. Tan also incorporates sisterly relationships in the text to reinforce the mother-daughter matrix.

The text focuses on two mother-daughter pairs that arrive at certain degrees of mutual recognition towards the end of the narrative. Amy Tan positions the first mother-daughter pair, Lulu and Violet in the historical city of Shanghai that witnessed many political upheavals. The conflict amid Lulu and Violet is primarily out of maternal passiveness and indifference. The second pair, half-Chinese Violet and Flora gets separated from one another due to the patriarchal and racial endorsements. In both the mother-daughter pairs, the conflict further aggravates due to the physical separation of mothers and daughters out of external betrayal. The plot follows three narrative sequences -- grandmother Lulu's search for her lost daughter Violet whom she believes to be dead, mother Violet's search for her daughter, Flora and granddaughter Flora's quest for her inexplicable qualms about her parentage and ethnicity. Tan provides multiple versions and altering standpoints on significant events that are central to these women who create meaning from their personal perspectives.

The inclusion of minute details of courtesan life in *The Valley of Amazement* enlarges the understanding of allegorical boundaries of self and community. In a telephonic interview given to Kevin Nance, Amy Tan details the semi-autobiographical strains in the text:

> I came across a photo in a book at the Museum of Asian History

> called "The Ten Beauties of Shanghai, 1910." Five of the women in the photo were wearing clothes that were identical to what my grandmother was wearing in my favourite photo of her…. I still don't know with certainty whether my grandmother was a courtesan, and I would never say that she definitely was. But it caused me to think back on everything I'd ever been told by my mother about her, and thinking about things that perhaps my mother had inherited from her. I also looked into myself, to think about what I had possibly received through this same line of inheritance. From there I started imagining what life might have been like in a courtesan house, and the attitudes that might be developed if my grandmother found herself tossed into that world. (Tan)

Through the extraction of tentative clues from the old photograph of her grandmother, Amy Tan explores her hidden familial identity. The grandmother's grandiose costume in the photograph becomes the marker of exotic identity and curiosity. For Tan, the visual culture becomes the "carnivalesque" where fantasy challenges and subverts fixed identities and notions of self. (Bhaktin, *Rabelais and his World* 15). The lengthy narrative based on a single photograph of grandmother announces the significance of female gender in the process of cultural transmission.

Set in the early twentieth century Shanghai and San Francisco, *The Valley of Amazement* details the personal life experiences and sentiments of three

narrator protagonists, Lulu, Violet and Flora. The first eleven chapters are in the first person narration of Violet, interspersed with the narrative voice of Lulu. The first two chapters, “Hidden Jade Path” and “The New Republic” details Violet’s life with her famous courtesan mother, Lulu Mimi, Golden Dove, Magic Cloud, attendants and other Cloud beauties. It also explains the fall of the Ching Dynasty and the change in political power that affects the social relations amid the Chinese and the Americans. The chapters also introduce a Chinese painter, Lu Shing whose letter to Lulu persuades her to move to San Fransisco in search of her long lost son, Teddy. Realizing Lu Shing to be her unknown father, Violet identifies her half-Chinese identity who prides herself to be a pure American by race and manners. Lulu’s favourite client, Fair weather’s trickery leads to the separation of Lulu and Violet. When Lulu crosses ocean to unite with her son, Violet gets sold into another courtesan house by Fairweather to pay off his debt to a gangster group, Green Gang.

The next three chapters describe the life of Violet as a young courtesan. It also traces her journey from a naïve young girl to a successful courtesan under the guidance of Magic Gourd, her friend and the expelled former cloud beauty of Hidden Jade Path. Chapter 4 is in the first person narration of Magic Gourd who teaches her the etiquettes for virgins of the boudoir. The chapters introduce Violet’s first patron Loyalty Fang who maintains a lifelong relationship with her. Chapter 6, “A Singing Sparrow” is a milestone in

Violet's life as she befriends an American, Edward who gets into a serious relationship with Violet for the rest of his life. The living relationship with Edward gives Violet an opportunity to move out of her courtesan life. She leads a satisfactory life for a few years along with Edward, their little daughter, Flora and Magic Gourd. The next few chapters discuss Edward's contraction of Blue Disease and his subsequent death. Edward's legal wife Minerva takes Flora into her custody as Flora's birth certificate registers Minerva Ivory as the mother of Flora Ivory. The separation of Flora and unexpected turn of fortune ends up Violet in another courtesan house. The second courtesan life brings in misery to both Violet and Magic Cloud. Her relationship with one of her patrons, Perpetual, takes her into Moon Village Pond, a remote village miles away from the city of Shanghai. The two chapters titled, "Moon Pond Village" and "Heaven Mountains" exemplify the horrible experiences that await Violet and Magic Gourd at the house of Perpetual. After many months of agony, Violet, Magic Cloud and Pomelo, an ex-courtesan and one of the wives of Perpetual, make a bold escape from the house.

The second short section comprising of two chapters, "The Valley of Amazement" and "Fata Morgana" in first person voice of Lulu takes the narrative back to the late nineteenth century in San Francisco. Back in San Fransisco in 1897, Lucia chooses a disastrous path as a sixteenth year old teenage girl, when her crush on a Chinese painter Lu Shing compels her to

leave home and her country for China. Devastated by Lu Shing's devotion towards Chinese traditions, she is unable to alter his mind, despite her eternal American resourcefulness. The final chapter "The City at the End of the Sea" platforms a reunion of the grandmother Lulu, mother Violet and granddaughter Flora in Shanghai who exchange hopes of an optimistic life.

The Valley of Amazement displays the strategic manner in which letters amid individuals create an instructional female support system that indoctrinates women. The grandmother-mother-daughter letter exchanges in the novel, as a communicative act and an informal didactic tool, confirm a resilient maternal-filial relationship. In the novel, Tan projects the epistles as a tool that crosses the margins of habitual communication between mothers and daughters. The epistolary exchanges among Lucia, Violet and Flora from two distinct geographical spaces attempt to rework the primal tie of the strained mother-daughter relationship. Parading their narrative capacity and power, the maternal trinity utilizes the epistolary platform as "a hybrid space" that "deploys key strategies typical of the female domestic arena" (Cruz and Hernandez 75). The letter exchanges become the subjective exploration of maternal-filial love that caters to the emotional nurturing of both mother and daughter. As a feminine literary genre, maternal-filial letters in the text become a political mediation that creates a form of ventriloquism through which they give expression to their long silence.

The Valley of Amazement reflects on the ideological maternal agenda of

privileging silence over articulateness of the maternal past as an expression of feminine individualism. The three generations of women utilize silence in three different modulations. For Lulu, silence is a "destabilizing strategy" and her refusal to share her traumatic past with her daughter is a "resistance to patriarchal logocentricity" (Barbeito 203). Lulu's purposeful secrecy about her past life and Violet's paternal details become "a transitory point of resistance to fracture patriarchy" (203). The maternal silence of Lulu indicates her wilful attempt to erase loss and pain associated with traumatic experiences. Her imposed silence about her Chinese husband Lu Shing and her son Teddy is her defence strategy against the horrors of her traumatic past. She also desires to hide her promiscuous history from her daughter.

In Violet's case, silence operates on multiple levels during distinct time periods in her life. Violet's lack of articulateness to her mother about her survival becomes the token of her passive aggression over maternal absence. In the courtesan house, The Hall of Tranquility, Violet instigates passive silence as an expressive space of controlled resistance that allows her to adapt within the framework of patriarchy. In the narration of Violet's life as a courtesan, the female body regulated by sexism with one of her patrons' orders of "Keep your mouth closed" and "Do not make a sound" indicates the masculine imposition of silence (*VAM* 199). Later, as the third wife to Perpetual in the Moon Pond Village, her silence gets louder as her individuality and subjectivity are persuaded to merge with Perpetual's domineering will and

persona. Succumbing to the emotional wounds and physical trauma, Violet's silence becomes "a lamentable essence of femininity, a trope for oppression, passivity, emptiness, stupidity, or obedience" (Glenn 2).

Apart from the verbal silence, the women in the novel observe epistolary silences at distinct time periods in their life. As a powerful device that preserves the ethical positioning of mothers and daughters, epistolary silence arrests the disclosure of traumatic life events. In the narrative, epistolary silence is ensued as a result of voluntary epistolary delay. Violet's initial refusals to accept Lu Shing's letters and later, deferrals of sending reply letters to Lu Shing point to a kind of silence through which she registers her displeasure and anger towards him. The period of epistolary silence here forms a resilient space of feminine rebellion against Chinese patriarchy. The intentional strategic silence favours Violet both by silencing and othering the male addressee, her father.

Lulu also displays similar silence by not responding to letters from Lu Shing. Her intentional silence is an indication of conflicting or problematic emotions connected with her own concrete life experiences. As a non-discursive space, her epistolary silence becomes the strategy for displaying hostility and indifference towards her husband. Lulu's silence to the nineteen letters sent by Lu Shing envisages her long held "protest against patriarchal language, as a sign of integrity, or as the expression of an alternative truth" (Richards 89).

The Valley of Amazement witnesses the transference of maternal trauma to daughters even after the cautious silencing of the traumatic past. In the text, Tan celebrates the feminine quest for the "motherline" that traces a "sense of continuity" among matrilineal women who experience similar struggles at different points of time (O'Reilly 845). The text pronounces the unconscious and inevitable repetition of the maternal past in the lives of daughters. The haunting past of the American grandmother, Lucretia Minturn (Lulu Mimi/ Lucia) replicates and influence the lives of half-Chinese mother, Violet Minturn Danner(Vivi/Zizi) and half-Chinese granddaughter, Flora. The text situates the mother-daughter negotiations of commonalities and differences through the creation of an "intersubjective transgenerational space of remembrance" by which they surpass their racial, emotional and generational variances (Hirsch, *Generation of Postmemory* 87). Unaware of the maternal past, Violet repeats the same maternal actions -- loveless relationships, unlawful marriage punctuated by adversities and emotional seclusion. As Violet unconsciously recreates Lulu's footings, she layers Lulu's voice into her own thus constructing "double voiced words" which indicates the simultaneous sounding of mother-daughter voices (Morson and Emerson 147). As the mother's past merges with the daughter's present, the life story of Violet seems to replicate the life incidents of Lulu.

In her letter of reply to Lu Shing, Lulu enunciates her connection to her lost daughter, Violet as a bond no one else in her life can replicate: "She is

the only child I lost. She is the only one I grieve and will spend fruitless years searching for, even though she is dead" (*VAM* 529). While suffering the actuality of loss, she cultivates moral strength by realizing the politics and practice of motherhood inversely. The unanticipated loss of Violet depoliticizes and rematerializes Lulu. Similarly motherhood provides Violet behavioural and spiritual agency to abandon courtesanship. As the mother of Flora, Violet experiences "matroreform" which is defined as "act, desire, and process of claiming motherhood power" (Wong-Wylie 739). She engages in the creation of a significant motherline for her daughter, Flora, despite the faint motherline of her American mother due to the cultural discord she endured as a young girl in Shanghai. The separation from daughter Flora allows Violet to decipher her mother Lulu's maternal self: "But now I have the heart of a mother. I lost my child when she was three and a half years old… I did not let her go willingly…. I once believed with a child's heart that you left me deliberately" (*VAM* 541). The physical journey Lulu takes from America to China after ten years represents the figurative passage of transmitted postmemory. Her personal consent to revisit China can be considered as an act of her acceptance of melancholic past that has shaped her course of life.

The Valley of Amazement charts the transformative journeys of the matriarchal women across spiritual and physical geographies. They travel from the ambience of oppression and patriarchal marginalization and towards a space of matrifocal culture. The journeys in the text become a channel for the

reconstruction of the identities of women and their bond with one other. Operating on multiple levels, the feminine journeys in the text redefine both mothers' and daughters' sense of identities, their mode of resistance and their psychological restoration of disputed mother-daughter relationship.

The literal voyage undertaken by Lulu from America to China and then back to America encompasses a full circle journey towards self-discovery and self-realization. As the owner of her renowned courtesan house 'Hidden Jade Path,' Lulu projects herself as a pervasive figure and an indispensable part of the evolving commercial culture of Shanghai. Her American ingenuity and traumatizing life experiences contribute to her continually evolving identity as a woman and as a mother. Lulu's "*guanxi*" (influential connections) with high officials of China and America and her ability to articulate on relevant commercial matters made her the adored figure in all parties hosted by her (*VAM* 13). As an authoritative feminist figure, Lulu exemplifies the resolute American woman who is almost shattered by the psychological torment inflicted upon her by patriarchal and racial tyranny.

As an epitome of Western competence and Eastern responsiveness, Lulu stands as an admirable figure whom daughter Violet identifies herself with. Her quintessential American journey is in many ways cyclical and circular that embodies female experience with its "resplendent visions and unnameable jouissance" (Kristeva, *The Portable Kristeva* 354). In America, Lulu recollects her regret to work on Violet's emotional anxiety thus:

> She was the daughter who had tugged my skirts for fourteen years. I had wrongly believed she would always be there and that I could give her all that she needed the next day or the day after that. I knew her so well, loved her so dearly, and had shown her so little as she had grown older, and more independent, I thought just as I was at her age. That was how I had justified devoting my time to business. (*VAM* 527)

The epistolary bond with Violet allows Lucia to construct a positive identity for herself. Composed in the language of desire, Lulu's letters echo her repressed sentiments of fourteen years of physical and emotional separation from Violet. The maternal letters from America become a surrogate for daughter Violet, which form a "collaborative process of interpersonal communication" that brings the mothers and daughters on the same platform (Elliott et al. 144). As the personal letters enable Lucia to stage her subjectivity in relation to her daughter, her desire for self-distinction creates subjectivity for Violet too. The letters reveal a "female psychic reality" and "subjectivity at the discursive level" which unleash many suppressed maternal emotions (Wang 75). As a record of maternal feelings, Lulu's letters thus designate her desire to the unification of the mother-daughter identities.

Violet encompasses a literal and metaphorical journey through the Moon Valley Pond in search of her long lost mother and daughter. As a form of rebellion, her travel along the precarious routes is her choice to traverse the

culturally imposed boundaries. It also signifies her desire to trace her position between American and Chinese cultures. Her travel within the terrain of China is marked by many layers of oppression. Violet, though ignorant of her racial identity in her childhood, is depicted as the biracial daughter of White mother Lulu and Chinese father, Lu Shing. Violet's covering up of her hidden Chinese facial features with American confidence is suggestive of her "split self in perpetual conflict" (Stewart and Atkinson 131). Her cross cultural frustration leads to the rejection of her Chinese half and the embracement of her American half. Her journey through the mountainous valley is suggestive of her quest for Caucasian heritage. The topographical nebulosity of Moon Village Pond reflects Violet's ambivalent state of mind.

Violet's identification of her maternal genealogy in the beginning of the narrative is suggestive of the construction of her 'self' and cultural identity. Parading her pride in both English and Chinese linguistic specificities, she acclaims her racial and cultural belongingness while asserting her stance: "But she was captivating, everyone agreed, more so than a woman with regular features and great beauty. It was everything about her -- the smile, the husky and melodious voice, the provocative and languorous movement of her body…. She made each man feel he was special to her" (*VAM* 12). She recollects her mother's innate capacity to question the power of authority and conventions while claiming her privilege to stay away from expected feminine norms. In Violet's consciousness, Lulu serves as an ideal ego as she demonstrates all

the facets of a liberated, resourceful and unbound woman.

As a child, Violet is distressed at her mother, Lulu's involuntary virtual absence from her life. Lulu's failure to play guessing games and treasure hunts with her is considered as an act of estrangement by Violet. The emotional distance from Lulu allows Violet to outline her relationship with Lulu in negatives. At a conscious level, Violet senses Lulu's equal share of love to everyone which symbolizes Lulu's duplicity towards her in person that results in her emotional blocks. Violet's bitter reaction to her mother's duplicity is what she considers as a pathological and an untrustworthy side of Lulu. The absent mother induces in Violet a motherless feeling as Lulu fails to express [the] depth of [her] experiences, and feminine authority to value her life. Decrying the fact that her mother "had used her as a pawn," (*VAM* 30) Violet laments to Golden Love about her mother's lack of concern for her:

> I had once believed I was the most important person in her life. But in recent months, that was disproved…. She said she loved me, but I did not see any particular sign of that. I could not feel anything in my heart but the loss of her love. She had changed toward me, and I was certain that it had started the day when I threatened to betray her. Bit by bit, she was having nothing to do with me. (30)

Violet's lack of maternal affection reflects her mother's socio-cultural circumstances within the territory of the courtesan culture and life. The initial

resistance to come to terms with her maternal past stems from the emotional trauma of maternal passiveness in early childhood. The daughter's inner conflict, being rooted in her inability to decode her mother properly due to the unawareness of the maternal past, gets deteriorated by mother's miscommunication. Violet interprets maternal decision to leave China for San Francisco as maternal negligence and betrayal of motherhood. Violet, considering herself as an abandoned daughter, feels rejected and betrayed by her mother who defines everything as a "matter of necessity" (28). The removal of her sisterly friend, Magic Cloud from Hidden Jade Path and the inevitable separation from her pet cat, Carlotta adds to a deeper level of complexity in their mother-daughter relationship. Violet's articulation of motherly concern of pet cat, Carlotta to Lulu indicates her sense of despondency and distress at Lulu's indifference towards her. Violet considers the common experiences of maternal inaccessibility because of Lulu's preference and overt display of emotions towards her clients as a kind of maternal betrayal.

Violet's journey of self-discovery becomes a reinvestigation of her Chinese female self in the American within her. Her emotional and physical relationships with men develop a transnational identity that mimics her mother's past life. The separation from her mother and the comforts of home initiates a break in the strained mother-daughter bond. Her departure from the Hidden Jade Path and from her mother's domineering personality signifies a

daring fresh beginning for a Eurasian girl. Although leaving the maternal courtesan house liberates Violet from the confines and restrictions imposed by her mother and attendants, she finds herself entrapped within the patriarchal and anti-Semitic systems of Chinese society at large. The text demonstrates the centrality of mirroring in the formation of feminine subjectivity and identity. The mirror becomes a modernist image related to the concept of subjectivity. As a metaphor of self-reflection and self-examination, mirror opens the doors into the way in which Violet re-examines her hybrid identity. For Violet, confronting the mirror represents a medium of realizing her 'self' thus initiating the search for her identity. In order to ascertain the facticity of her material presence and racial identity, she constantly depends on her reflected mirror image. In an effort to reaffirm her American self, she looks into the mirror in various poses and gestures. Her self-inspection is suggestive of the unconscious anxiety of her racial identity.

Later, in "The Hall of Tranquillity," after applying the courtesan make up, she notices the disappearance of the western half from her face. Here, mirror functions as a "heterotopia," (Miller 4) the space where her half-American identity is resolved and reformed as Chinese identity in spatial and temporal dimensions: "With just these few touches, the western half of me had disappeared. I had become the race I once considered inferior to mine" (*VAM* 134). The Hall of Tranquillity not only binds her within the social and cultural contracts of the lives of a courtesan but also rejects the American half of

Violet's biracial self. Her relationships with men also signify her sense of emotional alteration. Her intermarriage with American Edward is linked with her desire for assimilation into the American society. The interracial marriage "function[s] not only as a romantic defense of traditional female roles within the patriarchy but also a political justification of American hegemony in Asia" (Espiritu 96). Despite the painful life events, Shanghai becomes "not a place, but a feeling of contentment" for Violet (*VAM* 430). Later, her alliance with Chinese man Loyalty signifies her deep Chinese soil consciousness. After many years of life in Shanghai, Violet comes to conclusion: "No matter how American I was -- or wanted to be -- China was, in my heart, my homeland" (292).

Violet's mother fixation is her phenomenological obsession with American Yankee spirit. It also indicates her desire to situate and identify herself along the line of matriarch. The agony of losing her daughter Flora precipitates Violet's understanding of her mother Lulu's deeds that lead to their separation. Unable to move from China to America, Violet's physical separation from daughter Flora causes a chasm of silence that interferes with their physical and verbal communication. In the letter addressed to Lulu, Violet exposes her mental disposition thus: "I once believed with a child's heart that you left me deliberately. I hated you. I know you were tormented that I might believe that. I feel the same torment, deeply and constantly" (541). Violet's words are a candid confession of how she places herself in

her mother's maternal identity.

Violet's memories of Lulu get modulated by her sense of self formed at separate places at distinct time periods. She conceives the separation from her mother as simultaneously emotional and psychological. This can be inferred at her interpretations of the maternal absence at different points of time. Her maternal references are filtered responses to the intense effect and significance of maternal separation. In her conversation with Edward, she communicates her mental agony thus:

> I spoke of her heartlessness in putting me in the hands of her lover, a man even she did not trust, and who turned out to be an animal who would eat his own mother. I spoke briefly of those days when I believed my mother would return, how I alternated between hope and hatred, until I gave up and all that remained was hate. (247)

As Violet frequently articulates the maternal loss, she forges a sense of connectedness to her mother. In her recurrent struggles to find herself a position between China and America, Violet seeks to structure an imaginary identification with her American mother. As an "intersubjective communication" maternal-filial letters in the text "reflects, betrays, or constitutes the relations between self, other and experience" (Brownlee 77). For these women, letters function as a personal record and universal document of feminine experiences and relationships amid them. The letters exchanged

between Lulu and Violet cement their effort for self-consolation.

The women in the text attempt to forge a connection between their handwritten letters and their body. In the text, letter writing becomes "an act of liberation from social censorship and personal inhibitions" (D'Arcy and Ángel 62). In the novel, the letter acts as a body in the sense that it embodies the writer, mother/daughter. The maternal-filial letters in the text are the inscapes of feminine identity. Lulu and Violet express their emotions through the body of letters. More than a literary outlet, the letter represents the absent sender. As Violet receives the reply letter from her mother, she detects the stains on the letter which she understands as the tears of Lulu: "Mother's return letter was hastily written and covered with splotches, which I guessed were tears" (*VAM* 541). Lulu's hand script becomes the decipherable sign and the tears become the fetish.

The letter exchanges between Violet and Lulu establish a metonymic bond between their text and emotional healing. When Lulu structures her letters in the language of desire and instruction, Violet rhetorically negotiate her needs in both emotional and practical language. Lulu's letters to Violet support the traditional schemata of feminine letter writing which is a blend of confession and remorse that pronounces her identity as relational. In her letter to Violet, Lulu attests:

> There are no excuses for a mother's failure and I will bear a black mark on my soul forever…. I can never earn your forgiveness. But

> I take it as an enormous kindness that you have written to me. And I am grateful that you have asked me to help you find your daughter and with shared understanding of a mother's loss of a child. (542)

As a depository of maternal trauma, Lulu's words validate emotional memory rooted in her life experiences. The letter that gives voice to her interiority symbolizes a self-contained reserve for her self-projection. When Violet engages herself in active epistolary contact with Lulu for the discovery of her lost daughter, Flora, she actually takes part in a reassessment of her mother's trauma.

Journeying beyond the boundaries of the Shanghai city, Violet finds a distinct space in the 'Buddha's Hand' at the remote village of Moon Village Pond, where she regains subjectivity and refurbishes her 'self.' Her active sexual life in Shanghai challenges female subservience to patriarchy and suspends women's confinement within the social space. The spatial movement across the territory of China provides her an autonomous feminine subjectivity. The shift in places allows Violet and Lulu to claim a socio-political sovereignty that is continually impended by racism, chauvinism and repercussions of lost loves and failed marriages. Though their journeys occur at distinct points of time, Violet acknowledges the maternal resemblance that integrates their relationship into an identity that includes both her mother's positionality as well as her own.

Flora, dissimilar to her grandmother and mother, experiences an enforced

journey from China to America. Amidst the rich family inheritance, Flora suffers from uncertainties stemming from her forced transition from her biological mother to Minerva. Although her separation from mother Violet happened at a very young age, she preserves some vague memories in the form of a heart-shaped gold locket around her neck. The touch of this unknown maternal gift incites a physical reaction in Flora that catalyses her search for truth: “It’s always been special to me., even before I knew where it came from. It was like a little magic heart, and I could touch it and it could make me strong or invisible or able to read people’s minds” (576).

Flora’s choice of covert pathways like absconding school tests, disobeying teachers, and shop lifting parade her emotional dysfunction and temper outbursts during traumatic periods of the surrogate mother-child relationship. Like her grandmother and mother, Flora also gets involved in promiscuous relationships. Her dubious relationship with a boy named Pen, resultant pregnancy and forced abortion allow Flora to undergo a transformation by surmounting her state of victimhood. She gets transformed from a deserted girl into a strong and self-reliant fighter. Her recurrent suicidal phantasies represent her attempts to free herself from the hostile family and to avenge her surrogate mother, Minerva. Her affinity towards Chinese dishes and China signifies her journey towards her mother and maternal culture. She articulates her feelings about China thus: “But I feel better here in China because everything is so different and anybody coming

here would be lost. I don't mean lost on the streets. I mean it's confusing and jarring and strange and new. The language is different, and you don't know the rules" (584).

Flora's choice to accompany her grandmother to China crystallizes her embracement of her half-Chinese identity which is shaped and influenced by her unidentified maternal past. She embarks on a metaphorical journey through the backdrops of memory and loss caused by compulsive dislocation. As an epitome of unconventional and daring woman who sets out on a voyage of self-discovery, Flora's dislocation from America to China is a figurative expedition from insecurities towards definitive. As Flora discovers a renewed intimacy with her grandmother and mother, she realizes the bond with them as crucial for her identity.

For the three matrilineal women, America becomes a "feminized frontier" (Dickinson 8) that allows them to "define their lives outside racially and patriarchal biased orders that relegate them to invisible sexual objects" (Myles 4). Lulu appreciates the Americans' impulse for their sense of privacy and political, religious and personal freedom. She assures Violet that America will be a haven and suitable retreat for them: "In San Francisco, we don't need to defend our privacy. We simply have it" (*VAM* 73). Her decision to live in America can be considered as a breakout from enclosure, search for freedom and an embracement of the Yankee spirit.

Violet, as an ostracized woman by gender, class, race and ethnicity,

cherishes "the American Dream of abundance, protection, individual choice, and freedom from the strictures of a traditional society in the paternalistic name of heterosexual romance" (Marchetti 91). Even while accepting China as her homeland, Violet undertakes a spiritual and emotional journey from China to America as a flight from dislocation so as to complete Americanization. As she spiritually travels to America, she goes through a purgation rite which can be considered as a prologue to the emancipation from the restrictions of sexism in China. As she re-examines her emotional thoughts, she reflects on the significance of America in her life:

> On sleepless nights, when I could not bear my life, I thought of that ship and imagined I was aboard. I had been saved! I was its only passenger, standing at the back of the ship, watching Shanghai recede -- an American girl in my sailor dress, a virgin courtesan in a high-necked silver jacket, an American widow with streaming tears, a Chinese wife with a black eye. A hundreds of me were crowded on the deck, looking back at Shanghai. But the ship never left, and I would have to disembark, and begin my life again each morning. (*VAM* 588)

For Violet, America becomes a metaphorical canvas upon which she can paint a revitalized and peaceful childhood, adolescence and youth. By experiencing Americanness in China, Violet attempts at a harmonious merging of both Chinese and American qualities into a comfortable new ethnic identity.

After the short term stay in China, Lulu and Flora return to America. Leaving behind mother Violet does not indicate a permanent mother-daughter separation. By Addressing Violet as 'Mama,' Flora desires to confirm the culmination of their bond. Flora's decision for a temporary separation from her mother is an indication of her psychological retrospection for an emotional unison with her mother. Flora expresses her desire to return to the womb or the primordial state of being through her decision to stay in her grandmother's house in America. As the mothers and daughters cross physical, psychological and metaphorical boundaries, they attempt at "initia[ing] new signs of identity" which transform and rejuvenate their female psyche (Bhabha 2).

The Valley of Amazement elaborates on the literati of the mother and daughter who blend the oral and visual arts favoured by the male elite's literary tradition. Scholarship in both oral and visual repertories which includes poems, paintings, music and dance forms make the matriarchal women a part of high culture. In spite of their primary profession within the confines of the decorated boudoirs, they manage to seek time and space for literary aspirations. By negotiating female subjectivity beyond traditional boundaries, the mother and daughter in the text appropriate literary scholarship to announce their authorial statuses and thus redefine their selves. Lulu, Violet, Golden Dove, Magic Cloud and other flower sisters belong to the elite group of celebrated prostitutes known by the title "*mingji*" who "had the opportunities for literary pursuits, such as poetry, dance, music, painting,

calligraphy, opera singing and performing" (Shephard and Leonard 297).

The appreciation of an abstract from Walt Whitman's poem "Leaves of Grass" proclaims Violet's status as equal to Edward, her male counterpart. The poetic renderings between Violet and the painter-poet, Perpetual textualize the boudoir environment into a revitalized and creative space. As Violet listens to Perpetual's poem, "It was an endless time…. Bring her words to me" that thematizes profound love, she constructs a space for commemorating her dead partner Edward and their lost child, Flora. Later, in Moon Pond Village, Violet's rendition of "Lonesome little lovesick China man," summarizes her emotional quandaries -- as the daughter of Lulu, forced abduction, years of life as a courtesan, love affairs, departure from Shanghai as the wife of Perpetual, and her final unshared desire to make a return back to Shanghai. Violet's rendition of the "Peach Blossom Spring" establishes a new arena of female experience. Her execution of the story with the accompaniment of the zither establishes her as the voice of reason over passion which discounts her identity as a courtesan. The literary pursuits with clients bestow her with self-promotion and literary advancements that reinforces and advertises her communal, sensual and literary influences, proficiency and scholarship.

The desire to learn calligraphy signals Violet's attempt to construct a specific gendered implication and space through the medium of mechanical and technical writing in the boudoir. The brushes, ink and the thick stacks of rice paper become her metaphorical tools for representing experiences and

structuring spatial and emotional bonds denied to her. Perpetual, as an instructor, educates Violet the significance of calligraphy: "He told me I had to prepare my mind, prepare the ink, and prepare to create each character by seeing the flow of the brush strokes required" (*VAM* 329). She transforms the chamber of her boudoir into an intersubjective space of mutual dialogue, ingenuity and delight. While Lulu accentuated her intellectual brilliance over her identity as a courtesan, Violet reiterated her sexual power as a literary figure blending in both the facets of her identity in distinct ways.

The relationship between the grandmother, mother and daughter in the narrative is sieved through a complex structure of mediating relationships which include many individuals, both male and female -- Lu Shing, Loyalty, Edward, Magic Cloud and Golden Dove. Through each of these figures, the three matriarchal women gain access to each other. Apart from lessening the variance in the mother-daughter bond, the relationship with these people plays a crucial role in the personal development of mothers and daughters.

Tan inculcates a shared epistolary network which includes the participation of male figures especially father Lu Shing and Chinese businessman, Loyalty Fang. These men act as mediators who create an intimate space for the mothers and daughters. Lu Shing and Loyalty Fang act as third party correspondents who set an affective tone for the communication of messages amid Lulu, Violet and Flora. Lu Shing's letters to Lulu and Violet and Loyalty's letters to Flora become flexible tools of communication that

obscure paternal/ male voices and prioritise maternal voices.

The novel certifies the paternal composition of letters at significant points which influence the lives of mother and daughter. Lu Shin's letters to Lulu and Violet, serving as a "pallid summary of his own spiritual agony," represent Lu Shing's desire to recuperate his troubled relationship with them (306). His letters addressed to his wife, Lulu and his daughter Violet indicate confessions of his grievances as an imperfect husband and father. Positioning Lu Shing as the representative of Chinese patriarchy, Amy Tan delineates the voluminous power of male authority in China. As he speaks to Lulu of his familial duties, Lu Shing expresses the vitality of Chinese culture: "After all these years in China," he said, "do you still not understand how powerful a Chinese family is? It's the weight of a thousand tombstones, and my father wielded it against me" (64). Lu Shing's letters deal with the revelation of many hidden secrets between mother Lulu and daughter Violet. Lu Shing's epistolary union with Lulu and Violet after years of sparse contact affirms his desire for an intersubjective connection with them. Designed for a feminine community, his letters function as the avenue of empowerment and effectual agency for the progression of female identity.

The letters of uncle Loyalty becomes a written testimony which engenders a sense of connection with Flora's long separated mother and her motherland. As a verbal link between Flora and Violet, Loyalty mediates the intergenerational diffusion of parental memories in a subtle yet powerful

manner through his letters. The concealment of letters to Flora from uncle Loyalty by her Surrogate mother, Minerva compounds the distance amid mother Violet and daughter Flora. The fortuitous discovery of letters educates Flora of her Chinese roots and allows her to speculate on her indefinite past and her anxieties about parentage.

In *The Valley of Amazement*, the mothers' and daughters' interaction with women caters to the dual processes of their self-healing and emotional transformation. The women in the text share histories of physical and emotional trauma that enable them to solidify their position within the Chinese socio-cultural scenario. As a feminine mode of relation, sisterhood in the narrative becomes an "ideal and alternative within patriarchy" that enable women to "envision a life and a set of affliations outside of the paradigm of mother/child relations and the compromises with men that motherhood seems to necessitate" (Hallstein 33). The three women in the text turn towards female friendships so as to pacify their ego precincts and restore emotional completeness. The female friendships in the text include surrogate mothering, solicitousness and willingness to enact the part of parents in their absence. Women like Golden Dove, Magic Cloud/Gourd, Pomelo, Charm and men like Cracked Egg, Loyalty, Edward, Danner become "essential others" who assist the three women in attaining "a fulcrum for development" and "a springboard for developing a firm sense of self, with a capacity for empathy and intimacy" (Kieffer 69).

Lulu's intimacy with Golden Dove which is based on mutual support reaffirms her feminine self. Lulu chooses the liberation of female friendship over submission to patriarchy which provides her the determination to assert the choice of becoming a courtesan. The development of a 'homosocial' relationship with Golden Dove allows Lulu to create a "woman-to-woman dyad" that systematizes a specific gendered position within patriarchy (Kowaleski - Wallace 526). Her subversive sisterly bond with Golden Dove based on emotional closeness and spiritual support enables her to overcome isolation. Their relationship -- through the establishment of the courtesan house -- underscores their recovery from physical and emotional tragedies. The active sexual life and business oriented social exchanges facilitate Lulu to reach the emotional stability essential to heal her injured psyche. Her relationship with Golden Dove "moves through an experiential herstory of her life and formed the basis for evaluating the rest of her relational world" (Kuba 42).

In the territory of China, Violet's essentiality for self-discovery is facilitated by women such as Magic Gourd, Pomelo and Charm. Magic Cloud's obtrusive presence throughout her life is significant to Violet's personal development. She remains the female figure instrumental in Violet's growing maturity and individuality. As Magic Cloud shares her traumatic past life experiences to Violet, she learns to look beyond superficial realities. Being an active Chinese courtesan and knowing the realities of the courtesan life, Magic

Cloud introduces the life of sexuality to Violet. Violet's interactions with Magic Cloud permit her to accept her Chinese heritage by celebrating the matrilineal legacy and refuting the traumatic part of the courtesan culture. This is evident from her recognition of Shanghai as her homeland instead of America. She becomes Violet's surrogate mother who instils in her vital aspects of Chinese courtesan culture that are necessary for survival. Her sensibility and compassion provides Violet with an ethical compass to traverse the new course that she must journey through. Her care and guidance remain priceless to Violet, serving to boost her flickering confidence and poise in times of intense anxiety and nervousness. Violet communicates her emotional connection with Magic Gourd thus:

> She had been more than an attendant, more than a friend, more than a sister. She had been a mother to me. She had worried, sought to protect me from danger, guided me towards the best. She had looked out for my future, assessed the worthiness of everyone to be in my life. And in that way, she had taken me as her purpose in life, the one who gave her meaning. I had had constant love all along. And in recognizing that I felt moved to tears. (*VAM* 255)

As Lulu and Violet reshape their disposition through the camaraderie established with female community, they enunciate the significance of female bonding as the plausible relationship that provides freedom for women. The innate bonds amid women in the text manifest a perpetual effort to create a

feminine sphere galvanized by memory and solidarity.

The Valley of Amazement explores the complexity and ambiguity of the feminine experience by handling female sexuality as a metaphor of resistance to the ideology of patriarchal domination. Contrary to the rigid definitions of womanhood, Tan liberates feminine sexuality from within the confining patriarchal parameters. In the text, Tan postulates a true sexual intersubjectivity that offers a "reconceptualization and re-evaluation of women's sexual exploration, pleasure and agency" (LeMoncheck 29). Exploring their desired sexual selves, the mothers and daughters in the text expand the boundaries of their sexuality.

For Lulu, the social space within her native land of America is marked by the strained relationship with her self-absorbed parents. Her father, John Minturn's sexual deviations and mother, Harriet's negligence persuades Lulu to seek emotional fulfilment outside the domestic deportment of parental territory. Her physical relationships with men become a cue to her definition of sexuality as a domain of exploration, pleasure and agency. Lulu's ethics of sexual conduct and her interracial affair with Lu Shing suggest her rebellion against her parents.

Lulu's border crossing gives her the licence to undertake a journey of self-realization. She comes to associate her sexual liberation with embracing the Chinese and denial of the American sides of her identity. In retrospect, Lulu claims that the lack of parental affection shaped the course of her life:

"I wanted Mother and Father to know about my promiscuity -- to punish them and have them look at me with open disgust. I could then tell them in shouts of fury how selfish they were, how great my own disgust was, and I would name incidents I had written down" (*VAM* 444). Lulu expresses her critical outrage of parental insufficiency, especially her mother's lack of empathy and compassion towards her. Parented by an emotionally absent mother who crossed the maternal line into her study on dead insects and a freethinking father who reinforced his extramarital bonds, Lulu inherits little family experience to mediate the impact of her parents' negative behaviour. Refashioning her existence as a mode of resistance to rather than a preservation of patriarchal values, Lulu invents ways to manipulate men by idealizing the institution of courtesanship. Asserting her autonomy in the control of her body and material possessions, sexuality offers Lulu an intersubjective space where her body becomes "not an object but a talismanic extension of [her] desire" (Comer and Sommers 87).

Violet embodies the essence of oriental hyper-femininity through which she employs sexuality as a manipulative tool to destabilize patriarchy. Posing herself as a typical Chinese courtesan who publicizes a sexualized subservient image of Asian femininity, her sexuality defies the domestic passivity recommended by patriarchy. In the early years of courtship, she epitomizes the seductive persona of the exotic woman who is hyper-sexualized as an object of male gaze. Her negotiation of sexual encounters with her first patron

Loyalty Fang, a prosperous young man Eminent Tang, the American Bosson Edward Ivory III, and the scholar Perpetual indicate her open acknowledgement of feminine sexual agency. Negating to be a victim of racial and masculine impositions of identity, Violet exercises her personal choices of marriage and pregnancy. The physical union with Edward in the wilderness of the Heavenly Horse Mountain in Shanghai offers her moments of solitary independence that highlights her sexuality and free individuality. Outside the periphery of the decorated boudoir, the ambience of forest and fragrance of wild jasmine grant Violet self-autonomy from afar male gaze and spectatorship.

When Lulu's body becomes the site of resistance against patriarchy, Violet's body becomes the space for both her self-discovery and healing. Performing and posturing femininity with panache, Lulu and Violet challenge the cultural assumptions and visual constructions of gender, sex, sexuality and class. They become "burlesque performers" who unleash the servitudes of hierarchical ceiling of the patriarchal bourgeoisie supremacy and control (Willson 4). The matrilineal women articulate post-feminism that surpasses the traditional and stereotypical feminist ideologies. The ornamentation of their bodies as part of visual commodity culture becomes a vivid performance of their selves. Flora utilizes her sexuality as a feminine form of vengeance upon her surrogate mother, Minerva. The shortcut hairstyle, plaid dress, indifferent behaviour and flirtatious nature are her means of showing aggression towards her adopted family.

The three matrilineal women illustrate the exercise of female agency within sexuality. At the outset, the women in the text embody heterosexual male fantasies of female sexuality. Lulu, Violet and Flora struggle to overpower the constraints imposed upon them by marital expectations, communal and spiritual tradition and the intrusion of patriarchy in the delineation of their identities. The multiple love affairs become acts of rebellion through which they obtain self-definition. Tan's matrilineal courtesan women decode the silence and absence within the phallocentric discourse and project their body as a site of feminine expression beyond the male discourse.

Lulu and Violet shifts from naivety to expertise through the manipulation of their sexualized bodies. As they engage in a cultural critique of the patriarchal structures in China, they also sense their necessity for personal freedom. The blatant articulation of sexual pleasures points at their expression of unrestrained American freedom. Their sexuality exists beyond the patriarchal boundaries as they experience and communicate the feminine sexual pleasure. Their body becomes the means of 'hetero-erotic jouissance' that exacts revenge and exercises their own power.

In *The Valley of Amazement*, Amy Tan includes paintings as metaphorical conduits that unfold the invisible connection amid the mothers and daughters. The title of the novel is named after the series of landscape paintings entitled as 'The Valley of Amazement' by the Chinese painter, Lu Shing. The paintings denote innate feelings of deprivation and psychological distress, constant

conflicts of hope and hopelessness, and seething fury, bitterness, jealousy and sexual frustration experienced by the women protagonists in the text. Lulu, Violet and Flora give diverse interpretations to the same landscape depending upon their life situations at distinct points of time. Engulfed by the emotion of love towards Lu Shing, Lulu considers the painting as a magnum opus that "captures many moments, many emotions" of "hope, love, and purity…." (*VAM* 447). The painting produces distinct emotions in Violet at different years of maturation. As she discovers the painting for the first time, it arouses in her "a queasy feeling" and she feels that "the painting meant you were walking into the valley, not leaving it. The rain was coming. It was dusk, turning dark, and you would no longer be able to find your way back" (106). She considers it as an omen of danger.

Later, granddaughter Flora considers the painting as a bad replica of another artist's work. In Flora's perception, Lu Shing is a "phony artist" whose artistic work is "whitewashed with fake happiness" and "it was not happy and it was worse than fake. It was dangerous" (572-573). The landscape of valley thus becomes a talisman all through the novel that fastens together the lives and stories of matriarchal women whose lives are uncovered by it. The paintings in the novel represent mirrors as they develop self-awareness among the characters. As the three women look at the paintings, "what they see is not just the picture; they might in fact see themselves" (Winnicot 157).

In *The Valley of Amazement*, Amy Tan follows a curious pattern in the

manipulation of characters' names, especially mothers, daughters and the men they encounter with. The names of characters in the novel function as "exaggerating mask[s]" which defines the persona of characters by highlighting their relevant characteristics (Felecan 274). The multiple names of women during different stages of their life highlight their evolving identities. Even if Christened as Lucretia Minturn after the famous orator Lucretia Mott by her mother, Lulu adopts multiple names during different stages of her life. Associating her name with verbatim like "ludicrous, secretions and cretin" she displays her emotional distancing from her mother and her frustration over inappropriate labelling (*VAM* 439). In Lu Shing's opinion, Lucretia becomes Lucia because of American coincidence and Chinese fate. In China, she shortens her name to Lulu which conceals her American self and helps her to accommodate herself in China. Later, modifying her name as Lulu Mimi with the English translation 'Hidden Jade Path' she reconstructs her identity outside the periphery of a defined matrix.

Lulu names her daughter after her favourite flower "Violet" which is "unmanageable and invaded any bare spot under a tree or bush" (438). By naming her daughter, Violet, Lulu desires to raise her as a "miniature queen" who "grow[s] free, far and wide" without any gender constraints (503). Her birth name, Violet Minturn Danner, gives her legitimacy and American citizenship. Though she hates her name in the beginning for its multiple variations like Viola, Vyola, later, in course of time, the name becomes "the

continuity of a lifetime development of a personality and identity within the [courtesan] community" (Kiome-Gatobu 38).

Edward names her new born daughter as Flora and calls her "the most perfect replica of the most perfect woman in all eternity" (*VAM* 269). Reminded of the flower sisters in the courtesan houses, Violet initially had mixed feelings about the name Flora which means flower. She herself is reminded of her multiple identities of Vivi/ Zizi and her many other nick names. The acceptance of the name 'Flora' indicates Violet's identification with her dichotomous legacy. Violet perceives in Flora an individual and a future matriarch who has choices and definitive decisions in life:

> I wanted to give her my best qualities -- my honesty, persistence, and curious mind. I did not want her to have my worst, the contradictions that also existed in me: my dishonesty, hopelessness, and sceptical mind. I did not want her to waver, as I had, between what she believed to be true of herself and who others thought she should be. She would not be a captive figure in a painting, like my mother had been. (293)

Similar to her mother's wishes, Flora adheres to her personal choices during her adolescent years of life in America. Her decision making empowerment based on the philosophic principle of autonomy and principle of sovereignty bequeathed from her mother and grandmother relocates her from America to China.

The text is a meditation on the process of both voluntary and compulsory literary tradition in epistolary form that allows the effective assimilation of mothers and daughters and their attempt to create a third space. As they attempt "to outline a niche for themselves, they move beyond the polarities of power and prejudice" into a constructive space (Bhabha xi). When Flora moves along the boundary between Chinese and American cultures along with her grandmother, Lulu, she detects a unique space on the "borderline of history and language, on the limits of race and gender" where she "translate[s] the differences" between these two cultures and forms a solid identity (244). The newly formed space temporarily detaches her from the already existing parameters of American culture. The 'in-between' space gives Flora the locus point for sharing strategies of selfhood that initiates new signs of identity.

The epistolary activity amid the mothers and daughters in the narrative touches on how matriarchal women disentangle their restraining identities through self-representation, flout the ceilings of rigid conventions and create new identities and subjectivities. Lulu, Violet and Flora write to comprehend their essential selves which allow them to secede from the oppression of gender biased expectancies. The missives in the text become a "therapeutic reformulation of the interdependence of mother and daughter" that "solve the conundrum of their mutual expression and transform old forms of specularity" (Jolly 111). The three women arrive at "feminotopia" which is defined as the "idealized worlds of female autonomy, empowerment and pleasure" wherein

they “share the mystique of being autonomous retreats impenetrable to masculine authority, happily sequestered from the large patriarchal world of which they are inevitable part” (Mitchell 161).

Chapter VI

Conclusion

Amy Tan articulates the significance of maternal sensibility that allows women to connect and locate themselves within the matriarchal line in her fiction. As an excellent metaphor of matrilineal memories and culture, storytelling in Tan's fiction demonstrates the extension of maternal love and concern towards daughters. It suggests a spiritual and metaphorical journey back to the maternal culture and a projection of an essence of femaleness and a key criterion of ancestral tradition. Tan communicates the maternal influence and inspiration that reinforce her literary composition. In describing her relationship with her mother, she describes a different kind of inheritance:

> I say the muse is my mother, the woman who gave me both my DNA and certain ideas about the world. Or I pay homage to my grandmother and say that it is she who inspired me to find my voice because she had lost hers so irrevocably. (*OPF* 250)

The creative manifestation of maternal storytelling in Tan's novels announces the restoration of commotion between the mothers and daughters in both ethnic and radical senses. Tan's specification of Chinese talk-storying confirms to the feminine -- both maternal and filial -- participation which enable women to remain physically within. A definitive genre in the realm of oral histories, the talk-story becomes a prototype that sustains oral cultures by identifying

and recollecting the unheard voices and contexts.

The talk-stories in Tan's novels make use of Chinese oral tradition to attest the feminine connection with the Chinese heritage. Their orality functions as a vibrant and interactive activity within domestic-familial sites and a social act of bonding that contests the patriarchal society. In Tan's novels, the oral tradition involves a gradual dialogic relationship between mothers and daughters. Her talk-stories become a discourse that empowers her female characters as they seek definite means for articulating their emotions under restricted situations. For Tan, the ritual of storytelling is an emotional rehabilitation as her novels instigate on the sentimental sensation of compassion in the contemporary arena.

Amy Tan attempts to trace a transcultural intermediate space between daughters' quest for identity and the contradiction of maternal culture. Tan utilizes the midmost space in a prolific manner that facilitates her to reclaim her maternal culture without marginalizing the dominant culture so as to establish order and understanding in mother-daughter relationships. The novels of Tan are meticulous compositions in which grandmothers, mothers and adult daughters struggle to vocalize their personal stories within the context of relational stories. As the women remain connected within maternal cultures, they construct their own identities within the context of relational cultures. In all her novels, Amy Tan distillates on the conflicts and the final compromise between mothers and daughters and continually invokes Chinese history and

Shanghainese topography to contextualize her depiction of Chinese American experiences. Tan's depiction of Chinese landscape, presented as a phantom space preoccupied by family enigma and ethereal pasts, serves to detonate the women's American life. All her novels acknowledge the significance of matrilineage and pioneer a policy of relationality that moves beyond gender and racial precincts.

In the narrative space of Tan, talk-story becomes a suitable mouthpiece for reimagining and revitalizing the past and involves a selection of the maternal culture and traditions. As a communal discourse and a narrative strategy, talk-story incorporates the familial traditions, history, adages, legends, allegory and advisory announcements. Amy tan's treatment of talk-stories in her novels in multiple forms -- intergenerational co-narration, oral storytelling, memoir writing, and epistolary writing -- signifies her meditative attempt to construct and perform an identity that permits her to be Chinese even when she recognizes and favors her Chinese American ancestry. Attempting to decode the paradoxical messages radiating from the dual heritage, Tan struggles to find a distinct voice that can articulate both her Chinese heritage and American rearing.

In her novels, Tan engages in the concept of intersubjectivity which is oriented towards the recognition of the 'other' existing outside oneself, as opposed to alleging 'other' as an extension of oneself. Tan's texts announce how the intersubjective connection forges and strengthens first generation

Chinese mothers and their second generation daughters. The intergenerational transmission of life experiences in the form of narratives act as an essential strategy for spiraling identity and ascertain identification within the mother-daughter dyad in Tan's texts. The stories shared between women in Tan's novels encompass the oral and written transmission of personal and shared collective histories and memories. The talk-stories in Tan's texts give the daughters' a comprehensive understanding of maternal suffering, culpability, love, lenience, and courage. Tan's novels engage in the recovery of the Chinese American female voices which expedites feminine vernacular and the personal ipseity by chartering and reinforcing communal ties among intergenerational intersubjective society of women.

Amy Tan's construction of matrilineal narrative, as extended in the four select works, *The Joy Luck Club*, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, *The Valley of Amazement* suggest a potential solution -- the dilution of dissent in the maternal-filial conflict -- for resolving feminist ambivalences in concepts of motherhood and matrilineage. Deviating from the common daughter-centric texts, Amy Tan adopts the multiple voices of both mothers and daughters which allow the productive combination of maternal-filial voices. Tan's novels emphasize the discursive position the women (mother and daughter) occupy amidst the semiotic and the symbolic and the disruptive potential of the women to contradict the symbolic and patriarchal. Extending the linkage of matrilineal to mother-daughter bond, Tan projects the

relationship as a distinct aspect of femininity with the inherent belief that females, particularly mothers and daughters share inextricable identity and propagate amongst themselves a distinct dialect of matriarchy.

In the narrative space of Amy Tan, the first-generation Chinese mothers socialize their daughters to survive in the racist and sexist world while nurturing generational dynamics that initiate "individuation in a self-with-other manner, rather than self-versus other dialectic" (Henry 173). Tan's stories of women disclose the furtive foretastes of Chinese people and ceremonious events on the periphery of their lives. The maternal experience of displacement and migration to the United States and their personal recovery is intimately linked to the history of the Chinese Americans in United States.

The maternal narratives in the texts are encompassed by the past memories of seminal events like China war, Rape of Nanking, experiences of postwar years and migration to United States. In her novels, Tan voices the impositions of individuals, especially women, under the postwar regime, who underwent severe psychological oppression and physical trauma. The second-generation daughters in Tan's text articulate in a multi-voiced discourse which reflects their complex hybrid identities that challenge their femininity. These daughters remain second-class residents psychosocially, economically, ethnically and politically. Tan's mothers and daughters in the texts "reclaim one another's repressed stories and voices -- to break, in acts of memory and language, the disciplining injunctions to silence and set the records straight

about their realities" (Ho 235). Tan's women protagonists recoup and repossess social agency in the recuperation of memory and experience. As Tan gives voice to the experiences of maternal past, she showcases the Chinese American families in their agony and complicities, and in their inventive and extensive stratagems for survival. Tan utilizes collective memories in her novels which evolve through shared experiences of individuals, especially mothers and daughters. It is a form of social remembering in which the communal recitation of shared past experiences are sensibly selected, remembered, communicated and transmitted between generations. The mothers in Tan's texts resort to collective memory where the past traumatic events are remembered and interpreted distinctly.

Amy Tan, in her works, challenges the one-dimensional perspective which demonstrates the notion that mothers distress their daughters and daughters discard their mothers. As agony, soreness and anger overarch the relationship, the Chinese American maternal-filial script becomes a source of feminine agency, subjectivity and empowerment. The texts describe how Chinese mothering shaped through cultural and patriarchal norms which leads to a disconnected or ambivalent mother-daughter relationship liberates both mothers and daughters. Tan's mothers' and daughters' attempt of sharing their emotional and communal experiences with one another signifies their commitment to earning mutual relationships and acquaintances. The multiple maternal-filial stories do not essentialize or enfranchise a flawless mother-daughter

relationship among the multiple sets of mothers and daughters in the four select texts, instead they celebrate the outcome of their endeavors to comprehend one another.

Language, in Tan's texts, serves as a depictive device which facilitates intercultural exchange and acts as a lens through which linguistic and ethnic representations are negotiated and molded. The mothers and daughters in Tan's texts remain custodians of one another's multiple, fragmented stories, concealments, and matrilineal genealogies. The women continually quest for meaningful aspects in personal relationships. These women forge a common language with which they engage in a dynamic, interactive making of culture and history rooted in social and emotional resources. In the books of Tan, Chinese and English languages become signifiers of allegiance, reputation, self-respect, history and ethnicity. For mothers, Chinese language serves as an object of representation which points to the various possibilities. It indicates their comfort in using the language and their ethnic identity in diaspora. The mothers employ English to Chinese 'code switching' -- the inclusion of single words, phrases or sentences into another language or switch languages in mid-discourse -- to disclose their sense of anger, despair and solidarity to their daughters. One of Tan's characters, Winnie in *The Kitchen God's Wife* elaborates on the syntactical possibilities of Chinese language which is context-dependent. The daughters use American English as their first language and consider Chinese as inferior. For the mothers and daughters in Tan's

novels, language choice is symbolic of their conflicting ideologies. In the narrative space, Tan's fictional mothers articulate in Chinese American interlanguage which is in English laced with Chinese ways of configuring sentences. In the essay, "The Mother Tongue", Tan explains the significance of the Chinese American interlanguage. Tan comments:

> … my mother's English is perfectly clear, perfectly natural. It's my mother tongue. Her language, as I hear it, is vivid, direct, full of observation and imagery. That was the language that helped shaped the way I saw things, expressed things, made sense of the world. (*OPF* 273)

Tan utilizes language as a "speculative instrument" and a symbol of social identity which demonstrates the inextricable coexistence of language and identity (Oster 30).

In her novels, Tan reworks her personal position of in-betweenness which defines her bi-cultural identity by transforming the fictional space into the forged voice of the Chinese American female community. The women in the novels strive to establish their private voices and selves in the socially diverse and gender-conscious milieu of the late-twentieth century America. As these novels inscribe the maternal and daughterly experiences, both mothers and daughters speak as subjects in these texts challenging Hirsch's notion that "To speak for the mother…, is at once to give voice to her discourse and to silence and marginalize her" (*The Mother-Daughter Plot* 16). Tan's novels

privilege both mothers and daughters who form indispensable part of Chinese American history. Her texts resonate with the multiple aspects of the forgotten past as keen realities that influence both the participants as well as the inheritors of the maternal memories.

The women protagonists of Tan rewrite their sense of selves by challenging patriarchy and carving distinct and unique lives for themselves and their families in America. They adapt themselves to endure and renegotiate the new experiences of America which nurtures their personality and polishes their emotional spirit. These women protagonists in Tan's novels become survivors. Tan, in many ways, challenge the clichéd portrayal of Chinese American women who surmount the impediments of racism and sexism and sieve novel voices that ratify their fortitude and ingenuity.

Amy Tan seeks to create new paradigms of representation and location in her novels as she seeks to claim a sense of habitat in Chinese American diaspora through politicized claiming of space. The maternal stories in Tan's texts foreground frequent border crossing and constant exploration of selves which highlights interspatial fluidity and spatial associations. In the novels, Tan condenses the proximal distance between the mothers and daughters which enable them to augment a positive identity. This enhances the relationship amid them and outlines the iconicity of their domestic spaces as synonyms for maternal womb and mother.

For Tan, writing affirms to a pattern of argument, unearthing and

construction of cultural identities. Tan's novels reconfigure the American experience through the policy of disparity, emphasizing the significance of diversity within American cultures by defying the status quo of American identity. The fiction of Tan romanticizes universalized and flawless performance of concordant mother-daughter relationship and suggests essentialized sisterhood. The mother-daughter tales in Tan's novels cross-examine the manifold dilemmas and ordeals at women's sites of struggle within conflicting discourses that continually interrelate to demarcate their influence and outlook in society.

In the novels, Amy Tan employs cultural referents like myths and ancestral icons, humor and satire, body and sexuality, gender and ethnicity, spatial depiction and geological sense of self, cynicism and women's forte, narrative performance and performativity. The cultural aspects in Tan's fiction become interpretative paradigms in the schemata of identity formation and critical disputes on the fictional representations of mothers and daughters. Amy Tan's fiction projects how women revise and renew their selves through modified Chinese myths and gender biased icons. Her texts incorporate revised Chinese patriarchal myths that subvert gender ideologies and empower women and liberate them from patriarchal domination. Tan reconstructs and deconstructs myths to demarcate both the American culture and Chinese culture. The inclusion of modernized myths qualifies her Chinese existence in America and polishes her identity as a Chinese American. In *The Joy Luck*

Club, the four vignettes demonstrate the strained relationship between mothers and daughters. In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Tan replaces the male Kitchen God with a female Goddess, the Lady of Sorrowfree. In the novel *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, the myth of oracle bone establishes the maternal-filial connection. The Buddha's hand in *The Valley of Amazement* reconnects daughter Violet with her lost matrilineal connection and homeland. The application of multiple myths in Tan's fictional space becomes an intricate process which allows the transcendence of complexities. It restores the mythological past which reinforces feminine creative powers. The refashioned Chinese myths to adapt to the Chinese American ways form a resilient device for the Americanized daughters to negotiate maternal culture.

Amy Tan employs the strategy of humor and dramatic irony in her works to lighten the darker moments of intergenerational maternal-filial conflicts. In the novels, the humor and satire, which tends toward situational inconsistency, and theatrical satire, act as coping mechanisms that stabilize the emotional imbalances amid mothers and daughters. In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, the verbal gaffes like Helen's misidentification of Pearl's disease as multiple neurosis, Helen's mispronunciation of her benign tumor as *B nine* tumor and Winnie's fractured version of English adage, "Eat, drink, be married" are instances of humor that move the characters forward. In *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, Tan projects LuLing's dementia in a humorous tone. LuLing's references to Chinese bell tones as "Buddha-ful" indicate malapropism or inaccurately used

idioms. The humorous overtones in the texts works through a sense of polysemy with women characters manipulating dual meanings to uncover paradoxes and tensions in the context.

The Chinese women in the novels of Tan resort to utilize their bodies as a form of patriarchal criticism. Tan's emphasis on female suicide in the texts projects the supremacy of female body. The female body in her texts functions as a weapon to disempower patriarchy and a means of empowerment and liberation from clichéd circumstances. In *The Joy Luck Club*, An-Mei's mother "plan[ned] her death so carefully that it became a weapon" and in *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, Precious Auntie's suicidal death suggests her antagonisms against patriarchal dominance (*JLC* 239). Tan's portrayal of women is dynamic as she projects them as active survivors of repressive patriarchal society. In the novels, Tan discusses feminine sexual identity as central to the construction of self. She expunges western notions of Asian women's sexuality as passive and sexually unassertive. In asserting their sexual selves, Tan's women claim their sexuality without conforming to societal dictations. In *The Valley of Amazement*, mother Lulu and daughter Flora handle sexuality as an allegory of resistance to the system of patriarchal domination. Winnie, in *The Kitchen God's Wife*, realizes female body as something to be shared and desired by woman also. Tan's texts highlight the diversity and variability in women's self-defined sexual identities that allow them to reclaim self-conscious voices.

Amy Tan's novels which embrace elements of biography, autobiography, mythology, folk tale, talk story and memoir, provide detailed glimpse into the Chinese ceremonies and heritage including ethnic festivals, marriage ceremonies, and other cultural rituals. The flash back memories and mystic narration of the maternal stories in the texts function as reservoirs for literary creation and for the articulation of feminine voices. Apart from diasporic demands, Tan's texts include intersecting threads which embrace issues pertained to gender, biculturalism and ethnicity. She assembles the ethnic elements and literary fragments to construct her fictional mosaic with a diverse set of devices like motifs, symbols, allusions and images. When storytelling forms an overarching motif that covers her entire works, Tan invariably incorporates several other motifs like silence, mirror, dreams, memory, food, clothing, sexism and language to define the intricacies in the lives of women, especially the mothers and daughters in the text. These representations reconstruct the maternal-filial identities in defiance of male arbitration. The several motifs in her texts inform reconfigured associations amid China and the Chinese American diaspora in the modern era. Tan's China as a backdrop, cultural space, and geopolitical entity reveal dual considerations of her relationship to the land. When the depiction of war and other patriarchal disruptions in Tan's novels indicate the lack of political freedom in China, her reminiscences of the maternal land suggest her spiritual connection with ancestral homeland and her post memories of maternal memories. In the

four select novels, the commemoration of China presumes the form of a nostalgic memory which affirms the abjection of China in quest of an improved life in America. The daughters in the novels like June, Waverly, Lena Rose, Ruth and Pearl witness the sufferings of their Chinese mothers in the American community who remain exhausted and exploited during hours of their heroic resistance. Tan critically classifies and challenges the forces that repress the sentimental character of social relations and agency. The daughters in Tan's texts learn the significance of sustaining relationships and alliances as they continue to explore new emotional spaces to survive.

Amy Tan's maternal characters like Suyuan, An-Mei, Ying-Ying, Lindo, Winnie, Precious Auntie, LuLing, Violet and Lulu formulate a distinct feminine identity dissimilar to the stereotypical representations of Oriental women. These women develop devotion towards Chinese American history in opposition to the dual marginalization by historical treatise. Tan links up the Chinese American history in the form of Chinese oral tradition imploring maternal assistance. Tan's novels focus on how social, political, economic and cultural differences infringe maternal-filial bonds and the acuity of maternal legacy in imaginary explorations of identity. The transference of maternal legacy remains crucial to the daughters' self-development and agency. In *The Joy Luck Club,* June's inheritance of heirloom jade pendant from her mother Suyuan accumulates the covert experiences and stories that have long remained devalued and distorted in the ancestral land of China. In *The Bonesetter's*

Daughter, daughter Ruth engages in a literal documentation of her maternal story through which she desires to vocalize the memories of her mother and grandmother. Precious Auntie, LuLing and Ruth thus integrate their identities through writing memoirs with which they construct a durable legacy of maternal-filial bond.

Amy Tan's fiction conveys the vital part of America's multi-faceted feminine experiences. Tan's texts unveil the issues of biculturalism -- Chinese character and American circumstances -- along with the maternal-filial conflicts. The recovery and reconstruction of narratives of selves provide vital entry into complex maternal-filial lives. It also envisions the communal history of women and social communities that stitches together different generations, vernaculars, classes and ethnicity. Tan's novels prolong the literary convention in which the generational interactions between women are positioned against a background of historical process of resettlement and assimilation in America. Tan traces the ways in which the maternal-filial communication diffuses ancestral legacy, ethnic identity, and communal traditions through the recounting of private and collective experiences of Chinese American life.

Works Cited

Adams, Bella. *Amy Tan*. Annotated ed., Manchester University Press, 2005.

Agnew, Vijay. *Diaspora, Memory and Identity: A Search for Home*. University of Toronto Press, 2005.

Alexander, Simone A. James. *Mother Imagery in the Novels of Afro-Caribbean Women*. University of Missouri Press, 2001.

Allen, Paula Gunn. *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions: with a New Preface*. Beacon Press, 2015.

Altarriba, Jeanette. "Does Cariño Equal 'Liking'?" *International Journal of Bilingualism*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2003, pp. 305–322., doi:10.1177/13670069030070030501.

Angelou, Maya. *Mother, A Cradle to Hold Me*: Random House Publishing Group, 2009.

Anzaldúa Gloria. *Borderlands/La frontera: The New Mestiza.* 3rd ed., Aunt Lute Books, 2007.

Assmann, Aleida. *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Barbeito, Manuel. *Feminism, Aesthetics, and Subjectivity: Essays on Women and Culture in Early Twentieth Century British Literature*. Univ. of Santiago De Compostela, 2001.

Barlow, Tani. *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism*. Edited by Inderpal Grewal et al., Duke University Press, 2004.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard, reprint ed., Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. Routledge, 2014.

- - -. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 2015.

Benjamin, Jessica. *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism and the Problem of Domination*. Pantheon Books, 2006.

- - -. *Shadow of the Other: Intersubjectivity and Gender in Psychoanalysis*. Routledge, 1998.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2012.

Bhaktin, Mikhail. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Edited by Caryl Emerson, Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2013.

- - -. *Rabelais and His World*. Translated by Hélène Iswolsky, Indiana University Press, 1984.

- - -. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Edited by Michael Holquist and Vern W. McGee, University of Texas Press, 2014.

Bloom, Harold. *Amy Tan*. Blooms Literary Criticism, 2009.

Brown-Guillory, Elizabeth. *Women of Color: Mother-Daughter Relationships in 20th-Century Literature*. University of Texas Press, 1996.

Brownlee, Marina Scordilis. *The Severed Word: Ovid's Heroides and the Novela Sentimental*. Princeton University Press, 2014.

Campbell, Robert Jean. *Campbell's Psychiatric Dictionary*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

Carsten, Janet. *Ghosts of Memory: Essays on Remembrance and Relatedness*. John Wiley & Sons, 2008.

Chen, Lingchei Letti. *Writing Chinese: Reshaping Chinese Cultural Identity*. Illustrated ed., Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Revised ed., University of California Press, 1999.

Chowdhary, Raqib, and Roby Marlina, editors. *Enacting English across Borders: Critical Studies in the Asia Pacific*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014.

Chu, Patricia P. *Assimilating Asians: Gendered Strategies of Authorship in Asian America*. Duke University Press, 2000.

Cixous, Helene. *Laugh of the Medusa*. Reprint ed., Springer, 2011.

Chau Nguyen, Nathalie Huynh. *Memory Is Another Country: Women of the Vietnamese Diaspora.* ABC-CLIO, 2009.

Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Routledge, 2002.

Comer, Todd A., and Joseph Michael Sommers, editors. *Sexual Ideology in the Works of Alan Moore: Critical Essays on the Graphic Novels*.

Illustrated ed., McFarland, 2012.

Conn, Peter. *Pearl S. Buck: A Cultural Biography*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Cosslett, Tess. et al. *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories, Methods*. Routledge, 2000.

- - -. "Feminism, Matrilinealism, and the 'House of Women' in Contemporary Womens Fiction." *Journal of Gender Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1996, pp. 7–17., doi:10.1080/09589236.1996.9960625.

Couser, G. Thomas. *Signifying Bodies: Disability in Contemporary Life Writing*. Illustrated ed., University of Michigan Press, 2009.

Cruz, Anne J., and Rosilie Hernandez, editors. *Women's Literacy in Early Modern Spain and the New World*. illustrated ed., Ashgate Publishing, Ltd, 2011.

Curti, Lidia. *Female Stories, Female Bodies: Narrative, Identity and Representation*. Macmillan International Higher Education, 1998.

Daly, Mary. *Gyn Ecology/ The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*. Beacon Press, 2016.

D'Arcy, Chantal Cornut-Gentille, and Ángel Garcia Landa José. *Gender, I-Deology: Essays on Theory, Fiction and Film*. Rodopi, 1996.

Davis, Rocio G. *Begin Here: Reading Asian North American Autobiographies of Childhood*. University of Hawai Press, 2007.

Dickinson, Renee. *Female Embodiment and Subjectivity in the Modernist Novel: The Corporeum of Virginia Woolf and Olive Moore*. Routledge, 2012.

Dong, Lan. *Asian American Culture: From Anime to Tiger Moms [2 volumes]*. ABC-CLIO, 2016.

Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Edited by Brent Hayes Edwards, OUP Oxford, 2007.

Duncan, Patti. *Tell This Silence: Asian American Women Writers and the Politics of Speech*. University of Iowa Press, 2009.

Dunick, L.M.S. "The Silencing Effect of Canonicity: Authorship and the Written Word in Amy Tans Novels." *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*, vol. 31, no. 2, Jan. 2006, pp. 3–20., doi:10.1093/melus/31.2.3.

Elliott, B, et al., editors. *Letters across Borders: The Epistolary Practices of International Migrants*. Illustrated ed., Springer, 2006.

Enns, Fernando, and Annette Mosher, editors. *Just Peace: Ecumenical, Intercultural, and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013.

Espin, Olivia M. *Gendered Journeys: Women, Migration and Feminist Psychology*. Edited by A. Dottolo, Illustrated ed., Springer, 2015.

Espiritu, Yen Le. *Asian American Women and Men: Labor, Laws, and Love*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1997.

Fagundes, Francisco Cota, and Irene Maria Blayer, editors. *Oral and Written Narratives and Cultural Identity: Interdisciplinary Approaches*. Illustrated ed., Peter Lang, 2007.

Felecan, Oliviu. *Name and Naming: Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012.

Feng, Pin-chia. *Diasporic Representations: Reading Chinese American Women's Fiction*. LIT Verlag Münster, 2010.

Flax, Jane. *Disputed Subjects: Essays on Psychoanalysis, Politics and Philosophy*. Reprint ed., Routledge, 2012.

Friday, Nancy. *My Mother, My Self: The Daughters Search for Identity*. HarperCollins, 2010.

Friedman, Maurice S. *Martin Buber and the Human Sciences*. State University of New York Press, 1996.

Glenn, Cheryl. *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*. SIU Press, 2004.

Grice, Helena. *Negotiating Identities in Asian American Women's Writing: Gender, Ethnicity, Subjectivity*. Manchester UP, 2002.

Hall, Stuart. *Cultural Identity and Diaspora: Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. Lawrence and Wishart, 1990.

Hallstein, D. *White Feminists and Contemporary Maternity: Purging Matrophobia*. Illustrated ed., Springer, 2010.

Hellwig, Tineke, and Sunera Thobani, editors. *Asian Women: Interconnections*. Women's Press, 2006.

Henry, Astrid. *Not My Mother's Sister: Generational Conflict and Third-Wave Feminism*. Indiana University Press, 2004.

Hirsch, Marianne. *Family Frames: Photography Narrative and Postmemory*. Harvard University Press, 2016.

- - -. *The Familial Gaze*. Illustrated ed., UPNE, 1999.

- - -. *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*. Illustrated ed., Columbia University Press, 2012.

- - -. *The Mother-Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*. Indiana University Press, 1993.

Hezford, Wendy, and Wendy Kozol, editors. *Haunting Violations: Feminist Criticism and the Crisis of the "Real"*. University of Illinois Press, 2000.

hooks, bell. "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness." *Women, Knowledge, and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy*, 2nd ed., Routledge, 2015.

Ho, Wendy. *In Her Mother's House: The Politics of Asian American Mother-Daughter Writing*. AltaMira Press, 1999.

Irigaray, Luce, and Mary Green, editors. *Luce Irigaray: Teaching*. Illustrated ed., A&C Black, 2008.

Irigaray, Luce, and Carolyn Burke. "When Our Lips Speak Together." *Signs*, vol.6. no. 1, 1980, pp. 69-79. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3173966

Jackson, Michael. *The Politics of Storytelling: Variations on a Theme by Hannah Arendt*. Museum Tusculanum Press, 2013.

Jeremiah, Emily. *Troubling Maternity: Mothering, Agency and Ethics in Women's Writing in German of the 1970s and 1980s*. Univ. of London, 2003.

Jolly, Margaretta. *In Love and Struggle: Letters in Contemporary Feminism*. Reprint ed., Columbia University Press, 2010.

Juhasz, Suzanne. *A Desire for Women: Relational Psychoanalysis, Writing, and Relationships between Women*. Illustrated ed., Rutgers University Press, 2003.

Kashima, Yoshihisa, et al., editors. *Self and Identity: Personal, Social and Symbolic*. Psychology Press, 2002.

Kiome-Gatobu, Anne. *Female Identity Formation and Response to Intimate Violence: A Case Study of Domestic Violence in Kenya*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013.

Kirby, Kathleen M. *Indifferent Boundaries: Spatial Concepts of Human Subjectivity*. Guilford Press, 1996.

Kristeva, Julia. *About Chinese Women*. Translated by Anita Barrows, M. Boyars, 1974.

- - -. *The Portable Kristeva*. Edited by Kelly Oliver, 2nd ed., Columbia University Press, 2002.

Kieffer, Christine C. *Mutuality, Recognition, and the Self: Psychoanalytic Reflections*. Routledge, 2014.

Kowaleski-Wallace, Elizabeth. *Encyclopedia of Feminist Literary Theory*. Routledge, 2009.

Kuba, Sue A. *The Role of Sisters in Women's Development*. Oxford University Press, 2011.

Kuehn, Julia, et al., editors. *Diasporic Chineseness after the Rise of China: Communities and Cultural Production*. UBC Press, 2014.

Landy, Marcia. "The Silent Woman: Towards a Feminist Critique." *The Authority of Experience: Essays in Feminist Criticism*. Edited by Alfyn Diamond and Lee Edwards. Amherst: Uni. of Massachusetts Press, 1977. 16-27.

Langellier, Kristin, and Eric Peterson. *Storytelling in Daily Life: Performing Narrative*. Temple University Press, 2011.

Lary, Diana. *China's Civil War*. Illustrated ed., Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Lauter, Estella. *Women as Mythmakers: Poetry and Visual Art by Twentieth-Century Women*. Indiana University Press, 1984.

Lavie, Smadar, and Ted Swedenburg, editors. *Displacement, Diaspora and Geographies of Identity*. Duke University Press, 1996.

LeMoncheck, Linda. *Loose Women, Lecherous Men: A Feminist Philosophy of Sex*. Oxford University Press, 1997.

Leverage, Paula, and Howard Mancing, editors. *Theory of Mind and Literature*. Illustrated ed., Purdue University Press, 2011.

Lieberman, Sally Taylor. *The Mother and Narrative Politics in Modern China*. Univ. of Virginia, 1998.

Loeffelholz, Mary. *Dickinson and the Boundaries of Feminist Theory*. Univ. of Illinois Press, 1991.

Lorde, Audre. *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*. CA: Crossing, 1982.

Lu, Tonglin. *Misogyny, Cultural Nihilism & Oppositional Politics: Contemporary Chinese Experimental Fiction*. Stanford University Press, 1995.

Lyon, Elizabeth. *Manuscript Makeover: Revision Techniques No Fiction Writer Can Afford to Ignore*. Penguin, 2008.

Madsen, Deborah L. *Feminist Theory and Literary Practice*. Pluto Press, 2000.

Malhotra, Sheena, and Aimee Carrillo Rowe. *Silence, Feminism, Power: Reflections at the Edges of Sound*. Illustrated ed., Springer, 2013.

Mannur, Anita. *Culinary Fictions: Food in South Asian Diasporic Culture*. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2013.

Marchetti, Gina. *Romance and the "Yellow Peril": Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction*. University of California Press, 1994.

Mens-Verhulst, Janneke van., et al., editors. *Daughtering and Mothering: Female Subjectivity Reanalysed*. Routledge, 2003.

Messerschmidt, James W. *Masculinities and Crime: Critique and Reconceptualization of Theory*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1993.

Miller, John. *The Globalization of Space: Foucault and Heterotopia*. Reprint ed., Routledge, 2015.

Minh-ha, T.. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Indiana University Press, 2009.

Mitchell, David T., et al. *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability*. Psychology Press, 2014.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Reprint ed., Zubaan, 2005.

Morson, Gary Saul, and Caryl Emerson. *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*. Stanford University Press, 1990.

Myles, L. *Female Subjectivity in African American Women's Narratives of Enslavement: Beyond Borders*. Illustrated ed., Springer, 2009.

Murphy, Patrick. *Handbook of Chinese Popular Culture*. Edited by Dingbo Wu and Patrick D Murphy, illustrated ed., Greenwood Publishing Group, 1994.

Nnaemeka, Obioma. *The Politics of (M)Othering: Womanhood, Identity and Resistance in African Literature*. Routledge, 2005.

O'Reilly, Andrea, editor. *Encyclopedia of Motherhood*. SAGE Publications, 2010.

- - -. *From Motherhood to Mothering: the Legacy of Adrienne Rich's Of Woman Born*. State University of New York Press, 2004.

Oster, Judith. *Crossing Cultures: Creating Identity in Chinese and Jewish American Literature*. University of Missouri Press, 2003.

Ostriker, Alicia. *Stealing the Language: the Emergence of Women's Poetry in America*. Beacon Press, 1986.

Pearlman, Mickey and Katherine Usher Henderson. Amy Tan. *Inter/view: Talks with America's Writing Women*: Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1990. 15-22.

Picarazzi, Teresa L. *Maternal Desire: Natalia Ginzburg's Mothers, Daughters, and Sisters*. Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 2002.

Pichietti, Virginia A. *Relational Spaces: Daughterhood, Motherhood, and Sisterhood in Dacia Maraini's Writings and Films*. Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 2002.

Podnieks, Elizabeth, and Andrea O' Reilly, eds. "Introduction: Maternal Literatures in Text and Tradition: Daughter-Centric, Matrilineal, and Matrifocal Perspectives." *Textual Mothers/ Maternal Texts: Motherhood in Contemporary Women's Literature*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2010.

Rich, Adrienne. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. Bantam, 1976.

Richards, Anna. "Suffering, Silence and the Female Voice in German Fiction around 1800." *Women in German Yearbook*, Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2003.

Root, Maria P.P. *Filipino Americans: Transformation and Identity*. Illustrated ed., Sage, 1997.

Rubin, Lawrence C. *Food for Thought: Essays on Eating and Culture*. Illustrated ed., McFarland, 2009.

Saunders, Max. *Self Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature*. OUP, 2010.

Schultermandl, Silvia. *Transnational Matrilineage: Mother Daughter Conflicts in Asian American Literature*. LIT Verlag Münster, 2009.

Scott, David. *Semiologies of Travel: From Gautier to Baudrillard*. Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Shephard, Tim, and Anne Leonard, editors. *The Routledge Companion to Music and Visual Culture*. Illustrated ed., Routledge, 2013.

Shor, Ira, and Paulo Freire. *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education*. Reprint ed., Greenwood Publishing Group, 1987.

Shoshan, Boaz. *Discourse on Gender/ Gendered Discourse in the Middle East*. Praeger, 2000.

Showalter, Elaine. "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness." *Critical Inquiry*, vol.8, no.2, 1981, pp.179-205. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stabe/1343159.

Sledge, Linda Ching. "Oral Tradition in Kingston's *China Men*." *Redefining American Literary History*. Ed. A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff and Jerry W. Ward, Jr. New York: MLA, 1990. 142-54.

Stene-Johansen, Knut, and Frederik Tygstrup, editors. *Illness in Context*. Illustrated ed., Rodopi, 2010.

Stewart, M., and Y. Atkinson, editors. *Ethnic Literary Traditions in American Children's Literature*. Illustrated ed., Springer, 2009.

Tan, Amy. "Author Amy Tan on her New Novel *The Bonesetter's Daughter*." *CNN*, 8 Mar. 2001, *www.cnn.com/COMMUNITY/transcripts/2001/03/08/tan/*.

- - -. "Ghosts at My Shoulder." Interview by Maya Jaggi, *The Guardian*, 3 Mar. 2001, Accessed 23 Apr. 2018.

- - -. "How Amy Tan Turned Pain, the Past, and Family Secrets Into a Piercing Memoir." Interview by Estelle Tang. *https://Www.elle.com/*, 10 Nov. 2017, www.elle.com/culture/books/.../amy-tan-where-the-past-begins-interview/.

- - -. "'I Recognize the Holiness of Death': An Interview with Amy Tan." Interview by Tishani Doshi. *The Hindu*, 31 March 2018.

- - -. "Q & A: Amy Tan on 'The Valley of Amazement'." Interview by Kevin Nance. *Chicago Tribune*, 3 Nov. 2013.

- - -. "Tan: "The Kitchen God's Wife"." Interview by Katie Couric, correspondent. *NBC Today Show*. NBC Universal Media. 17 June 1991. *NBC Learn*. Web. 17 January 2015.

- - -. *The Bonesetter's Daughter*. Penguin, 2001.

- - -. *The Joy Luck Club*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

- - -. *The Kitchen God's Wife*. Reprint ed., Penguin, 2006.

- - -. *The Opposite of Fate*. Reprint ed., HarperCollins UK, 2012.

- - -. *The Valley of Amazement*. HarperCollins UK, 2013.

Walters, Suzanna Danuta. *Lives Together/Worlds Apart: Mothers and Daughters in Popular Culture*. University of California Press, 1994.

Wang, Lingzhen. *Personal Matters: Women's Autobiographical Practice in Twentieth-Century China*. Stanford University Press, 2004.

Warburton, Ted. *Movement Research in the New Arts Praxis*. www.nyu.edu/classes/gilbert/collaboration/pdf/newartspraxis.pdf.

Weber-Feve, Stacey. *Re-Hybridizing Transnational Domesticity and Femininity: Women's Contemporary Filmmaking and Lifewriting in France, Algeria, and Tunisia*. Lexington Books, 2010.

Willson, Jacki. *The Happy Stripper: Pleasures and Politics of the New Burlesque*. Illustrated ed., I.B. Tauris, 2008.

Winnicott, D. W. *Playing and Reality*. Taylor & Francis Ltd, 2017.

Wong-Wylie, Gina. "Matroreform." *Encyclopedia of Motherhood*, doi:10.4135/9781412979276.n390.

Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own & Three Guineas*. Musaicum Books, 2017.

Wu, Hsin-Ching. "(Re) Producing Memory of the Forgotten: The Representation of Minority Cultures." *Memories, Histories, and Identities in Museums*. Springer, 2007.

Xu, Ben. "Memory and the Ethnic Self: Reading Amy Tans *The Joy Luck Club*." *Melus*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1994, doi: 10.2307/467784.

Xu, Wenying. *Eating Identities: Reading Food in Asian American Literature*. Univ. of Hawaii Press, 2008.

Yancy, George, editor. *Philosophy in Multiple Voices*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2007.

Yang, Mayfair Mei-hui. *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets: The Art of Social Relationships in China.* Cornell UP, 1994.

Zhu, Yun. *Imagining Sisterhood in Modern Chinese Texts, 1890–1937*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.

APPENDIX

1.	Author(s)	:	**Neelima V. and Dr.T.C. Brindha Kumari (Guide)**
	Title of Publication	:	**Recalling History: A Reading of the Select Works of Amy Tan**
	Journal Name	:	**Online International Interdisciplinary Research Journal (OIIRJ), Volume 8, July 2018 Special Issue (2)**
	International / National	:	**International**
	Publisher with ISSN	:	**Online Research Book Publication, Maharashtra ISSN: 2249-9598**
	Indexed by	:	**Index Copernicus International (ICI)**
	Impact Factor	:	**4.318**

2.	Author(s)	:	**Neelima V.**
	Title of Publication	:	**Memory Recoups Ethnic Roots: A Reading of Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club***
	Journal Name	:	**International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research (IJMER) Vol. 3 Issue 5(1)**
	International / National	:	**International**
	Publisher with ISSN	:	**Sucharitha Publications, ISSN: 2277- 7881**
	Indexed by	:	**Ulrich's Periodicals Directory @ ProQuest, U.S.A.**
	Impact Factor	:	**2.735**

3.	Author(s)	:	**Neelima V.**
	Title of Publication	:	**From Repudiation to Reconciliation: Mothers and Daughters in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club***
	Journal Name	:	**The Criterion: An International Journal in English, Volume 5, Issue-1**
	International / National	:	**International**
	Publisher with ISSN	:	**Research Center for English Language and Literature, Maharashtra ISSN: 0976-8165**
	Indexed by	:	**EBSCOHOST Database, Google Scholar etc.**

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that no changes were recommended to be made by the adjudicators of the thesis submitted by Ms. Neelima V., titled "Dual Consciousness: Dilution of Dissent in Mother-Daughter Relationship in the Select Works of Amy Tan".

Dr. T.C. Brindha Kumari
Associate Professor and Head (Retd)
Postgraduate Department of English
Mercy College, Palakkad